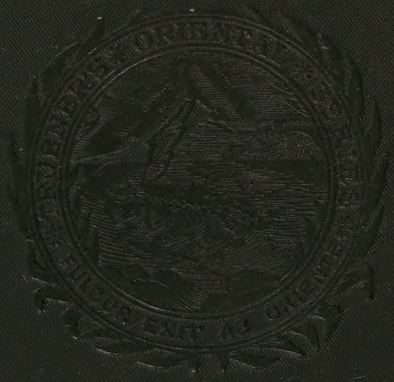

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THE SPIRIT OF ORIENTAL POETRY

BY

PURAN SINGH

Author of
Sisters of the Spinning Wheel, Unstrung Beads,
etc.

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PREFACE

THIS little book is a slender account of my journeys in search of His Footprints. For hours have I stood spell-bound, gazing at the humble dust upon which He once trod, yet I have passed the magnificence of jewelled diadems with indifference, for they had no fragrance in their charmed lustre, there was nothing of Him in them.

This is a basketful of musk-dust, gathered from the sacrificial fires that burn in places made sacred by the holy tread of His Footsteps.

Ever since I have seen Him, the remembrance of the scent of His presence has been my religion; whatsoever recalls it to my mind is precious; it surpasses all that I have ever valued. I am good only when my eyes half-close in rapture at the contemplation of His God-personality; to me nothing else is of virtue. For I know that when I go from Him into the world, full as it is of learned men with fine clothes and wrinkled faces, I feel no more whole—I am torn asunder, sullied, weighed down and spent; the formless vapours of my intellect dim the mirror of my heart, and I see no more what my eyes have so recently beheld. I come back disappointed and disillusioned, a sadder man. Not in the outer world, only in the heart of God do I find that iridescent lustre, that absolute rapture which makes me immortal in one flash. Every meeting with Him is an advance of centuries over my own self.

Even as I stand at a distance, contemplating the deadly weariness of the world, I feel sick at heart. The groans of the conquered mingle in my ears with the savage shouts of their victors. These beings called men are still so foolish that they know not how to make their ant-hill of an earth into a peaceful home for their own kind. What is the use of intellectual expansion? The mere touch of these world-problems turns good men into blood-thirsty soldiers brandishing swords; humane and religious ideals become rotten when applied to the petty politics of the children

of the soil. Notwithstanding centuries of civilization and development, man is still in the animal stage, armed with claws ; the keener his intellectual penetration the sharper the claws. The wisdom of this world leads to weariness, disease and death ; brethren rob and murder brethren and fill the day with blood.

At one brave flight to climb a high corner of the sky, casting aside the rubbish of dualistic worldly wisdom that we hold so precious and clasping to our breasts nothing but love and song and faith ; to laugh with the Sun over this flimsy world and clap our hands in unison with the thunder of the heavens ; this would give life : for this divine madness that forgets all wounds and blesses those that curse and smite and kill, seems to be for each of us the only way out of slavery, out of the dirt and dust of the world's suffering and sorrow.

Self-forgetfulness in the joy of His beauty—in other words Self-realization—is the way to happiness, so have the Sages proclaimed. It is only the meaningless throng of statesmen and philosophers—political thinkers, world-rescuers, self-appointed administrators of the Law and Justice of God and Man—it is only they who run to and fro like sleep-walkers, seeking the cooling snows of the Himalayas amid the burning deserts of the Sahara. So long as selfishness sways the individual, so long will the whole world be sick.

Safety lies in the shelter of the Great Man of God ; we seek it vainly in our brilliant sands of mere intellectuality. Safety is within me, with God in Self ! Only by the touch of the beauty of God-personality can selfishness be turned into the holiness of self-sacrifice. All knowledge is a curse, save only the knowledge of this Love that inspires Life.

I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd., for permission to quote a lengthy passage from *The Book of the Cave*, by Ananda Acharya, and to Mr. John Murray for permission to reprint the extracts from *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry* by Yone Naguchir (Wisdom of the East series), and Messrs. Dent and Sons for poems from *Nargás* by Bhai Vir Singh Sahib.

PURAN SINGH.

THE SPIRIT OF ORIENTAL POETRY

I

THE DIVINE POET

We love our poet rather than his poetry; our artist rather than his art. Hours spent with the Beloved in sweet calm, mingling our breath with His, are diviner by far than the chant of His songs without His presence. In exuberance of inspiration nothing suffices but His person; the touching of His Lotus feet brings the honey of eternity.

Mere literature is starvation. Unless we see His tent somewhere in the forest the landscape is empty. To that messenger alone do both man and nature give their love and sacrifice, who proclaims where the camp of the Beloved is pitched to-day.

Our idea of the poet is that of a man who can, by the mere opening of his own eyes, enable ours to see the Divine; whose one glance can be our whole knowledge. "How do you realise the Brahman?" the wise men of the East asked the poet in the forest, as we read in the Upnishadas. He smiled and they bowed down, saying, "Our doubts are dispelled, we know the Truth. The knots of our hearts have opened, the Lotus has bloomed in us, and we have attained peace."

The poet reveals to our souls his own self-realization, and in an instant we undergo the growth of centuries. The power of giving peace to the life-beaten man we see only in our poet; he is as the Banyan tree which affords shade to the sun-beaten wayfarer. The poet is not one of us, he is the messenger of God, His Prophet; he is God in human clay. In Hindu phraseology he is an *Avtara*. It is born in no one to do what he does. Mohammed, in his self-concentration, talks to angels and gods. No one else can talk like him with the Invisible. The miracles and the miraculous accompany the poet like his shadow. It was as simple for Jesus Christ to heal the sick and raise the dead as it was for those who stood by to watch. The poet has the gift of gods whom we on earth know not; his powers are not acquired, but are as natural to him as light is to the Sun. The poet has the whole abundance of Heaven at his back and his will is the will of God.

The poet's eye is so eternally fixed on the Beauty within that he sees outside objects in an unbroken trance. Shiva is always in Samadhi, but as the God opens his eyes, Parbati, his devotee, is ready with her bowl of green herb; he drinks and closes his eyes again! If the poet's ecstacy is no cure for the suffering of man, nothing else can be. His greatest work is to maintain His Divine Breath. To him Life is the highest altruism.

The poet (or, as we call him, the Guru, the Master, the Buddha, the Christ) fills the hungry soul, and enriches the poor. Desire dies and we are satiated and nourished by his touch. "None may be idle where the king-poet has pitched his tent." The musician, the poem-maker, the dancer, the singer,

are mere rank and file. In the Peace of His Presence thinking is sickly restlessness. It is the dominion of Soul over the splendours of mind.

Poetry is a perennial stream that flows out of this *fountain of life*. It is the *Smadhî* of ages. The infinite behind the poet infects us with life. No other poetry can equal, in its subjective effect upon us, the simple sayings of these poet-prophets. There are poems in their aspect; their words are life; their memory is fragrance of soul. Fixing our intention on them is the most practical way of discovering our own soul. The remembrance of their names is our ethics; repetition of the Sacred Names is our religion. They are our perennial inspiration.

Repeat Christ, Buddha, Guru Nanak, Upnishadas and the Koran, basking in the joy of soul they give; do so for years and you cannot exhaust their meaning, nor effect. Like particles of radium, those words go on forever emitting their rays. Millions daily read the Koran and the Bible, and there is life for millions more in them. Lenins may hang the bishops, but every grass blade will stand up to vindicate the faith of Jesus Christ.

What art can be so generous as the supreme art of the Lord of Peace. Sâkya Muni bathes the world in peace and ecstacy. Nirvâna is realized by widows, girls, beggars and princes. The courtesan cries: "I am Buddha! I am Buddha!"

A *Gopika* of Vrindabvan is going with her red earthen pitcher to fetch water from the river Jumna. The blue Krishna shoots the arrow from his bow as she is wending her way homeward with the pitcher full of water. His arrow breaks the pitcher. She

turns round, sees Krishna and abuses him. The Master bathes an old comrade of His once again in love. He drenches her, and " dyes " her in the colour of the divine soul. The spell breaks and the *Gopika* sings : " I am Krishna ! "

The poet's word blesses and alleviates the lot of the heavy-laden. Read his poetry and a million angels fill your soul with joy. Bliss is under the invisible wings of the Immortals ; we are transported, the air of our prison-cell becomes light and fragrant. The poor peasants and toilers of the Ganges plains find a solace in the reading of *Tulsi Ramayana,* such as no civilization can ever derive from the glitter of mere appearance. We desire the company of the Beloved in our soul. Ah ! What is the depth and strength of my Love-intoxication akin to that of Omar, when I am cast alone, resourceless in eternity ? That is the question. How strong is my personality, and what gives it strength ?

Whoso has realized God in his soul every moment breathes out the Breath of Nam ; all is poetry that issues from them into Space and Time. Precious are their daily talks, which are our Gitas—celestial songs. Take away our songs, we die. Mere bread and butter is starvation. Poetry is not simply a momentous pleasure, it is our very life.

The poet whose face dispels the darkness of our soul is our personal visible God. Religion is the art of absorbing the joy born of the inner freedom gained by His Touch. Here the pain of self-sacrifice becomes a pleasure the like of which no feverish excitement of our senses can give us. Some dead semblance of it we realize in sound sleep. It may be paradoxical,

but it is true, that though imprisoned in the physical, we still attain to Nirvâna through His love. The candle and the moth is a true instance of complete self-denial in full affirmation of personal love for the Beloved. This lavish wealth of renunciation is the mysterious strain of the Divine poetry of our scriptures. Moth and candle is the Supreme Motif.

If He choose to speak He employs the throat of the whole creation. If not, one single word in His presence is blasphemy. Spiritual joy is always autocratic, it obeys no law, but that of its own being. The tempest of the seas is its bugle horn, so is the silence of death!

No soul that has failed to find its own centre can participate in the pleasures and pursuits of life with good grace. Divine poetry does not please everyone; it is the refuge of the desolate. The way to find it lies through the knowledge of ignorance and of the illusions of life. Once reached, all is silent there; the disciple stands face to face with the Beloved. What can be sweeter than this meeting? Truth is realized; the tree of life is in blossom, its fragrance floats in the air, and man forgets all else. The great Illusion has melted into Truth itself. Thenceforward Life is pure rapture. When the soul is full of Him, perfection is everywhere; nothing mars the sense of the Infinite.

Whatsoever weighs down the inner self and seeks to imprison it in Illusion is foreign to the spirit of poetry. It is irreligious. True poetry must free us. There is no freedom in excitement, however intense it may be. There is no freedom in sorrow and renunciation, however perfect. Freedom lies in the

full realization of the Divine within our own soul. The full richness of our soul lies in its own centre. In that ever un-balanced balance of our repose lies Salvation. I do not believe that nature or man can make us free unless we, through His grace, realize for ourselves the truth of things and engraft ourselves on the Infinite. What has not yet gained its own freedom cannot free us. "Let me but once engraft myself on Thee, O Infinite! as a branch on a whole tree, and then let me slowly drink the life sap of Thy immortal Being and just blossom there."—*Guru Nanak.*

"Just blossom there" is poetry, spirituality, Immortality. Life is lightest in its own blossom!

Touch me with a song; if it be the song of the Emancipated One, I shall straightway be borne away in His arms above Illusion into the verity of all things. The true song is Immortal, ministering supreme fulfilment, where nothing is lacking! He takes me there and says: "Behold the Glory—God's soul runs through all things. As beads are strung on one thread so all things are in Him. It is all God."—*Guru Arjun Deva.*

The Sun shall pass away and the Moon,
And all shall pass away,
But ever abideth the word of the
Emancipated One!
It must come to pass.

(From *Guru Grantha.*)

Our highest poetry, therefore, is the birth of God on earth. It is as silent and as loud as the burst of the white lotus on the blue waters. The Name alone is the highest of the vitalising song.

Out of the deep and the dark, a sparkling mystery,
a shape, something perfect, comes like the
stir of the day,
One whose breath is an odour, whose eyes show
the roads to stars,
The Breeze on His Face,
The Glory of Heaven on His back,
He steps like a vision hung in air, diffusing the
passion of eternity;
His abode is the Sun-light of morn, the music
of eve His speech;
In His sight, One shall turn from the dust of the
grave and move upward to the woodland.

—*Y. Noguchi.*

To forget Him is to die. In this realization of the ineffable delight in the presence of the Beloved, we find our all. Its artistic expression in our language at best is as the statue of Sakya Muni carved in the stone of Gandhara. Verily *Dhyanam* is the fruition of all life. This we call love, and they who have this light burning in their hearts are on the way to the city of Eternal Bliss.

If palaces made of pearls, bedecked with rubies,
be before thee,
If the walls and floors be plastered with sandal,
musk and agar,
Take not thy eyes from the vision of the Reality.
Forget not, O Disciple! the name of the Beloved!
When taken away from the Beloved,
My soul takes fire, it is burnt down!
Forget not, O Disciple, the name of the Beloved!

If thy whole estate be made of jewels and gems,
And all thy halls are filled with veins of pleasure,

And wait upon thee the silver-limbed damsels
with their ruby lips whispering words of
passion in thy ears,
Take not thy eyes from the vision of the Reality,
Forget not, O Disciple ! the name of the Beloved !

If all magical powers be thine,
And thou canst become invisible at thy will,
And crowds worship thee !
Take not thy eyes from the vision of the Reality !
Forget not, O Disciple ! the name of the Beloved !

Even if thou be a Sultan,
And cohorts wait thy command,
It is all insanity,
Take not thy eyes from the vision of the Reality,
Forget not, O Disciple ! the name of the Beloved !

—*Guru Nanak.*

"The Name of the Beloved"—this alone is the secret of the life of the spirit, says Guru Nanak. Our poet is the incarnation of "Logos." None is ranked as a poet whose flesh is not scented with the perfume of God.

The invisible Celestials, the disembodied Adepts throng round the name of the Beloved in the consciousness of the devotee. Guru Nanak has told us that the disciples enraptured in the Samadhi of Nam meet dwellers of the higher worlds of life beyond death. For such, there is no solitude, no hunger.

He is the poet who converses with the Beings of Light from the inner Realms of the Soul—the Self—and here on earth represents God more than man. Any below this level of inspiration of rapture and

prophetic vision is poetic, but not the poet. The poetic among us are the highest men who, in higher altitudes, touch the Footprints of the Sacred Poets that come down to us as Inspired Beings from on high.

II

THE BHAKTA

When Song of Love is Service

He lives who loves God's Person.
No one else is alive.

—*Guru Nanak.*

The poet of the East, the *Bhakta,* is bare like a child, playing in God's sunshine, clothed in his own transcendent innocence, and filling his soul with the gladness of the honey-bee. He is always wending towards the Shrine of the Beloved. He burns with an inextinguishable desire for the divine. The life of the palace sickens him. Tolstoy had the tastes of an Eastern poet, though he made his mind sick with renunciation.

The deep sincerity of Omar Khayyam, rich with the red of the grape, comes to every poet of the East who rebels against the glaring hypocrisy of the priest.

The Sadhu's *Dhuni*—the fire of life—is ever burning! Shiva sits before his *Dhuni,* from whose glowing depths curl ever upward the clouds of purple, scented smoke.

The poet casts all that he sings behind him, dropping petals of roses on his path as he travels in aimless musing. He grows weary of the sky above him and of the earth beneath him. His life is like the fluttering of an imprisoned eagle who pants for freedom. In the

wild simplicity of the infinite expanse of his own self, he seems in his verse almost insane. But his abundant childlike carelessness is balanced well in the wisdom of Self-realization. The Divine mind directs his hands and feet, his impulses seem omniscient in relation to the exact fitness with the general schemes of things. His response is accurate and timely. His mind is informed of God's own sympathy. It talks with stars, drinks wine with flowers and "exchanges his turban"[1] with the red poppies. It is he who has torn asunder the veils of conventional lies, half-truths, compromise, and lusts of all kinds. He is God, who has driven man into the street and occupied the Temple of the human body as an ever new Palace of Life.

The Disciple's eye is "love-dyed" and it is this "love-dyed" eye that sees everything with the ever fresh, ever new passion that says: all is Divine. The intoxication of Absolute Knowledge is the same as the intoxication of Absolute Passion. The soul, like a dew drop swinging on a strand of the cobweb of Màyâ, realizes its own share of the Absolute Balance in the sunshine of its own song. The Disciple is unwilling to let himself slip even an hair's breadth from the supreme state of life, for here he is at one with God, he is God. And why should he go astray? Man is God, and to feel this is the supreme moment. This sublime repose of Self in Self sets an eternal standard in the bosom by which to judge things and men, literature and religion. The Life-givers who appreciate the glint of crystals in the glory of His Name, consider everything from this standpoint; they call things "heavy" or "light," "false" or

[1] In the Punjab by "exchanging turbans" strangers become brothers for all life.

"true." They feast on the joy of all that delights them and pass days in one single rapture.

Spiritual criticism of things is purely subjective, inexpressible, or expressed only in an "aye" or a "nay." If anything—a book, poem, wealth, intellect —intervenes but ever so little between their eyes and the face of their Beloved, the All-Blazing reality, or disturbs in the least their sympathy with the inmost chord of their being—Love—they cast it into the river, however beautiful its form and colour, for of what use is it if it tends to dim their vision? Their criticism is just for one moment and for one particular mood. They do not look at things once and forever. Sometimes they like the bitter and discard the sweet; on other days the reverse. Of what use is life if the Divine idea grows less in proportion to the Illusion that already overwhelms us? To be in sympathy with the Universe by being ourselves is our vocation; all else matters nothing.

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, the great mystic of Persia, took his erudite essays on Theology, Religion and Life to Shamas Tabrez, the emancipated, who was sitting in a great mosque on the edge of a marble lake, hoping to win some praise from this great Teacher. The sage took the manuscripts and threw them into the lake!

With us the service of love is the poetry of life. When we cook in His Name and feed the Lord, it is religion. Guru Har Rai, the seventh Guru, never ate anything outside his own kitchen, in the severe, ancient style of the orthodox Brahman, and then only at particular hours. One day, as he was riding, he stopped his horse before the door of a lowly cottage where lived the disciple. And as he stopped he said;

" O, daughter ! Bring me the bread you have cooked for me." The disciple's wife, almost beside herself in worship, in supreme Transcendence of the joy that His Love awakened in her, came out and offered him the bread. The Guru ate it as he sat in the saddle, blessed her and rode away across the fields. Next morning the attendants offered bread again to him while he was riding, thinking that he had changed his hour of meal. " No ! " said the Guru, " the bread I ate yesterday was the bread for which God himself comes into the body. It is a festal day when I have such bread."

Once our poet, Bullah Shah (the King Bullah) was passing through a street in Lahore. His black locks hung about his neck and his blazing eyes swept round, contemplating all things. A young girl was plaiting the tresses of a new bride into braids and decorating her with jasmine and roses.

Bullah Shah : What art thou doing, O, good lady ?

The Girl : I am braiding her hair, for to-night her husband cometh home.

Bullah Shah : Wouldst thou do mine, for I, too, may meet my Lord ?

The Girl : Come, good man ! I will do yours, too.

The great saint sat before her on the ground and she braided his locks like those of the bride and adorned his head with jasmine and roses. Then Bullah Shah arose and went away, for he lived far from the city.

Towards nightfall a jealous neighbour complained

in secret to the bridegroom that his wife had touched the hair of a stranger. The foolish Punjabi began to upbraid his wife. He was small in his jealousy; she was noble, large, spiritual and heroic in her innocence. In the midst of the altercation there came a knock at the door, at about midnight. "Open the door, O sister! Untie my hair. Untie it quick, O sister, for my husband beats me."

This feeling is *Faqiri* of the East, its poetry, and its religion. We are bond slaves of this God-like omniscience of sympathy for love and freedom.

Krishna calls on his old friend, Sudama. Sudama's wife, intoxicated with devotion, peels the plantains for Krishna, but offers him the husks and throws away the kernels. Krishna partakes with great delight of the husks of the plantains; he was eating of the very feelings of his disciple. When judging poetry or any other thing, we do not sit down to a meal of cream and plantains, we wish only for a loaf of Bread from the Hand of Love. Where is Life? is our cry, whose touch, whose glance, would make us "alive," whose love make us God!

Shri Ram Chandra meets in the forest the outcast and despised Bhilni, whose task it was to sweep the roads and houses of the Brahman Saints of the locality far-famed for piety, occult powers, virtue and learning.

Bhilni had the fire of Divine Love in her heart. In her leisure she had gone to the forest, gathered berries and tasted them. The sweet ones she brought home and stored for Shri Ram Chandra, and the sour ones she ate herself, waiting for him. "My Rama will one day come," thought she. She sang her song of waiting all her days, from middle life to ripe old

age, sweeping the streets as she sang. At last He came. She brought him the old dry berries. The king of saints, the Master, partook of them and blessed Bhilni. The berries ? Each was a work of art, each a thing of soul and love. Ram Chandra disdained the hospitality of the saints to eat of Bhilni's offerings. The man so sensitive to love is the true critic of the East, he is the Life-giver. His presence is our religion. He is our God-personality. His word is our everlasting life.

It may be true or false, the Life-givers of the East pay little heed to mere brilliance of intellect, to musical execution, or outward form. The art of "*doing*" is small, the art of "*being*" is all. A dancing girl may be perfect in skill, yet her art is of no value. But when she renounces all, puts the song of her grief to tune, and sings at the shrine unto His presence, she is light as a winged angel, and the tear in her eye draws another in the eyes of the saint. "All living things are made of light, both the good and the bad," says Guru Nanak. Things grow light when they renounce their little selfishness in the joy of His Love.

What a joy it is to hear an emphatic, democratic "yes" from Sakya Muni in this caste-ridden, colour-ridden world of duality and hatred.

The Blessed One passed by my house,
My house—the Barber !
I ran, but He turned and awaited me,
Awaited me—the Barber !
I said, "May I speak, O Lord, with Thee ?"
And He said, "Yes"; "yes" to me—the
Barber !

And I said, " May I follow Thee ? "
And He said, " O, yes," even to me—The Barber !
And I said, " May I stay, O Lord, near Thee ? "
And He said, " Thou mayest," even to me—the poor Barber !

I know the " Brother " never tastes meat. Almost from his birth he eats fruits and nuts, milk and green vegetables. He thinks it good that the birds should not be killed. Once he was the guest of a kindly, innocent villager, who loved God and goodness. This man used to go every morning to catch quails from the green wheat fields of the village, and his net would be full. He never could think that the " Brother " eats no meat ; all eat meat, he thought. He went out very early with his net, returned late, and was trembling when he placed before the " Brother " bread and two roasted quails, which he had cooked with his own hands. " Forgive me, O Honoured Brother ! I am most unlucky to-day. Every morning I used to get more than a dozen of birds for myself, but for Thee I could get but two. I am ashamed to place so poor a repast before Thee ! " The " Brother " smiled and blessed him and said : " How good is this repast." And he did partake, with a tear in his eye, of what his devotee gave him,

The water from the pitcher, the red earthen pitcher that my love goes to fill from a distant rivulet and brings home, singing all the way, has the fragrance of her soul. In the dim light of the dawn, like a bird, she rises from her bed and takes the corn, grinds it with her own hands in the hand-mill, all the while singing the songs of the Guru into the white flour ; she is like a dream, an ideal. With milk and flour in

her hand, with a song of Baba Nanak on her lips, there springs under my roof a gladder morn than morning. Through her strainer falls "the white flour like raining light." She kneads it and bakes it into bread. When the red fire comes out of the embers she has collected with her own hands, and kindled into flame by stealing a spark from her own glowing heart, there rises on my hearth a redder East than the morning East!

"Disciple! Up! Untiring hasten
To bathe thy breast in the morning red."

When the armies of the victors entered the Golden Land, as is told in the Ramayan, the new king, Bhabikhan, offered a string of rubies to Hanuman—the devotee of Râma. Hanuman broke open every gem to see if there was the image of Rama as it is as in his own soul! He broke every ruby and threw the string away, it was "heavy."

III

AS BHAKTAS SEE THINGS

(*i*) *Poets of the West*

Whosoever is full of the spirit of the " Logos," the Word of God, values all things of art according to the invisible effect they produce on the soul within him. What serves for the moment to make the flame of life glow brighter he calls " light," all else is " heavy." When he truly admires an object, a poem or a thought, it means that he has seen God in it. A " critic of gems " of this type said to me once, " Look ! They admire Delhi, with her tombs of saints, emperors and kings, but it is not half so ' light ' as the lonely tomb of Jehangir, on the river Ravi, where he sleeps side by side with his beloved and faithful Nur Jahan ! "

The singers of the Psalms and the Disciples of the Bible, who lived and died in love of Jesus, have served to create that live mind which enables one truly to admire and appreciate the poetry of the Master. Centuries of Christian life in Europe have brought about the success of the English translation of the Bible, which, they say, is even better than the Hebrew original. How " light," how refreshing, how life-giving, as Carlyle has pointed out, are the words : " Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin : and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe

the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or What shall we drink ? or Wherewhital shall we be clothed ? But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you." " Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." " He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." There is nothing like the Bible in the whole West. It makes a dead world alive as nothing else can. Beside it, all else is the babble of children.

Whatsoever be the gifts to us of a beautiful Keats or a musical Swinburne, nothing can approach the Divine Word in its calm Power of giving life and cutting the fetters of our bondage. Herbs may be fragrant but the water of Zemzem that creates life, is all that really matters. There is none equal to Christ or Buddha or Guru Nanak who by his mere word fills us with life, enriches our soul rendered so poor by fears of death and hunger, and cures by one Glance of Grace the distress of this hopeless life.

For the twinkling of an eyelid, once in a while, every man is poetic. But all mere earthly poets, like so many other manifestations of beauty in man and nature, stimulate our sense of joy and knowledge only when we are " alive." The creations of God, however fascinating, are not life-giving ; God alone can impart life. None but the Messiah can raise the dead. Others are helpless, with all the skill in critical interpretation of the created worlds.

When Shams Tabrez prayed for the resurrection of a dead prince of Persia, and thrice failed to bring to life the dead man, his cheeks glowed, his eyes flashed,

and his forehead sparkled as it had never shone before, and he said with authority, " Arise, my son ! Not in the name of Allah, but in my name, I bid thee rise." It was no more Shams Tabrez who spoke, it was God Himself. Such are our Heaven-souled poets, while others, mere poetasters are but word-painters, artists, singers or dancers. They may have touched the water of life and drunk of the Fountain, but they are not themselves fountains. To us, the saving, the life-giving Word of God, the " Logos " itself, is poetry. Give me but the Bible, I have no need of yonder trash.

There is a gorgeous palace of men and women, almost a universe in itself, created by the dream of Shakespeare. Juliet, the superb lover ; mad Ophelia ; poor, smothered Desdemona ; wise Portia ; innocent, divine Miranda ; imperial Cæsar ; matchless Cleopatra ; the two ambitious Macbeths ; even the superhuman Prospero, what a flood of music, of word, sound and sense flows through all these wondrous creations.

I suffocate in this literature. Where, in this assembly, is the Beloved, the Highest One, whose feet we may touch as Mary Magdalene touched the feet of Jesus ? How can the picture of life be complete without Him in person standing in the centre ? The Bhaktas of the East are fond of beholding the enactment of the simple drama, " Go, woman ! sin no more ; " " Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." What use is any drama that serves merely to increase the self-hypnotism whose pain is now growing unbearable. The blind intensity of Othello must be made impossible, love must be clairvoyant. And even if Desdemona was in love with another, how can Infinite Love be confined to one dark piece of

flesh ! Shakespeare's imagination could not go beyond the lower spirit-world from which ghosts come to grave yards at night and fly away at the breaking of the dawn. This great dramatist was not able to pierce Reality beyond the surface-movements of an ego fettered by its own desires.

Tragedy is a surface phenomenon, there is no hell save that we create for ourselves. Life is an infinite Paradise ! They who write tragedies are not yet enlightened. The function of poetry is to help us win our own paradise, but after reading Shakespeare, all that survives is a mental hell in which we may pass our days in unnecessary, artificial, yet terrible, agony. To produce sadness in the human mind may be wise, but it does not belong to the higher art of life which imparts bliss and banishes all sorrow. Let me look at the glory of Heaven, I am ashamed at the revelations of my nature that Shakespeare makes. Open the door, let me fly out, seeking God's mercy.

Perhaps we of the East can never catch the tunes of the Western poets, but viewed broadly, from our stand-point, they are strange, very strange, inasmuch as they strike us as the voices of mighty geniuses who forget themselves, and find so much childish joy in playing with coloured toys ! It were better to go on repeating the Bible, rather than keep writing our so-called poetry. Only when the songs of the Western poets resemble the poetry of the Bible, are they in any degree truly poetic.

Compared with Shakespeare, the genius of Dante[1] is *Dhyâni*. Unlike Shakespeare, there moves in the centre of the spheres of light in his mind, the figure of his Beloved Beatrice. Beatrice or God—what is in

[1] "Dante, as a singer of love, is entirely an Eastern poet singing of Beatrice the Oriental "woman."—*The Ideals of the East*, Okakura.

a name ? Beatrice is the God-personality that Dante worships. The whole universe with all its gods and angels grows dark as the figure of Beatrice fades in his eyes. We can understand this, but we fail to realize the sanity of Shakespeare. Shakespeare gives us portraits of ourselves in different stages and poses of " self," our " selves " of yesterday and of to-morrow ; but we want the face of God to burn in our breath so that we may be " live " and whole to-day. We want to see in ourselves reflections of the faces of angels. Of what meaning is the whole world, if it be not kindled by the " light of His face ? " We consider Shakespeare as grand as The Máyá of this created world. So far as we are concerned, his writings do not take us nearer our goal ! Shakespeare multiplies our ignorance by all the knowledge he pours on us. What can be gained by constantly seeing his plays ? Once in a while, it may be a good training in worldly wisdom, which, dealing with matter, is material, and has no power to receive Higher inspiration. Shakespeare represents to us the man of the earth, a thing we see moving in its varied character all about us ; and we hold that this knowledge of the Near is of little use to the Soul that is already flapping its wings to fly above all such things. In no instance does Shakespeare come near to the spirit of Goethe's Faust.

Burns is like the temple-minstrel passing along our streets ; we come out to see him as he sings the awakening song. Burns is a flame. We have a direct companionship with him. He is light as the zephyrs of the morn. His sound is HO ! HO ! O ! O ! the music of the soul. He is burning with the spirit of poetry like a lamp, and is universal as light. Every morning, while the people in the Eastern cities are yet turning in their beds, a singer of Psalms passes

through the streets, carolling holy tunes to awaken people to the glory of God and morning. Such is Burns !

Tennyson devotes much time to seeing that his verses rhyme well. I cannot endure him for his fault of being faultless. He is a Wonder-Palace of English literature, a great aristocrat and a great artist, but nothing more. He has not the imperfections of the real genuine hearer of the Word of God, that Word that maddens one with its infinite sweetness.

Once a great Indian Musician was singing the Vedic music faultlessly, in a choir of about fifty singers, when suddenly he went out of tune and all who were with him, and they were wafted into the higher realms of soul. When they returned, I asked the central figure what had happened ? Said he : " It was our good fortune to-day to peep into the Infinite, where the insanity of perfect joy took hold of us."

Tennyson is artistic, melodious, philosophical, but he has not the insanity that can break off from finite measures in sheer joy. He has more of assimilation than of self-Realization and on the whole he is tame, finite and deliberate. He bears the burden of his art upon his back. Such men, accustomed to fine clothes and the palace atmosphere, have not had the Dantesque baptism of the Fire of God. They are typical intellectualists of our age, heavy, wrinkled, and, on the whole, foolish, for they lose the prize of living in simple intimacy with love, in the intricate folds of the soulless drapery of a fine but empty drawing-room.

We of the East admire the lark soaring up to the sky rather than the miner delving for diamonds in

the endless beds of the conglomerate. What is the use of analysing human nature when we wish to transcend it. Browning's poetry is preoccupied with human psychology, he has a clairvoyant omniscience. The best service of man, however, is not to find wisdom for him, but to discover the substance of joy, and we can only do this by finding it in ourselves. But who has found the gladness of his soul ? Browning strikes me as a great sculptor who delights in making dumb clay speak for him. Shelley is the type of our *Bhakta !* Men and things weigh upon him, and his likes and dislikes are prophetic of what company he should have to keep himself well-balanced in his own heaven of joy.

Wordsworth exhausted himself in the delight of preaching the evident moral of beauty. He is, however, the true naturalist and, as the Japanese would say, " The Reader of the book of green cover." He is more preacher than poet, and often redundant and exasperating in his sermons.

Milton is sublime. The purity of his vision commands a grand language and he is of the choir of Heaven. He stands by himself like a mountain as a great disciple-poet of Christianity. He has the peace and patience of the Bible. Singing in his perfect English, Milton stands in the light that beats upon the Throne of Christ.

William Blake is the poet of our hearts. The perfume of God is in him and he is a companion of the soul. He has the spiritual vision with which Christ endowed his apostles. William Blake is like the celestial zephyr of the West. He is a true Christian ; a disciple-poet rich with vision and spiritual glow,

He burns amidst a galaxy of Western spiritual geniuses, with a brightness all his own.

Carlyle's ringing prose-poetry pierces the soul, it has in it the flutter of a bird wounded by an arrow from the Unseen; the wounds of the eternal make him ever awake to the verities of life and death.

At times he shares to some extent with that famous Rajput Princess, the Divine Miran Bai, the passionate devotion to, and deep concentration in God-personality. On this account, he is warmer, intenser, truer than Emerson, though not so immense. The literature created by Carlyle is like the burning fire of Heaven, glowing within itself, secure for all time, from the surrounding darkness. As the blacksmith plies his bellows, blows the blast in his furnace, makes the charcoal burn and glow red and white, heats the iron and shapes it on the anvil, so Carlyle is a blacksmith with many arms, he blows the air, while he turns his irons in the fire and at the same time beats them into different shapes! There is sweating and hard breathing! His countenance glows as the red fire burning within is reflected on his face, and incessantly he hammers with divine strokes on the shapeless iron of the material world. None among the Western poets has the sublime purposefulness of Carlyle.

The fire of his soul makes our hearts glow brighter. By contact with Carlyle, we believe, nay, we become, what Mohammed would call *Mussulmans* : we feel God Is. He is the type of prophet distinct from the so-called poets, jingling with their dull, slow-footed, cold-hearted rhymes, trudging along like asses under the beat of their cudgels, on the dusty roads of life.

In *Les Miserables* Victor Hugo succeeded better

than Shakespeare or even Bunyan in expressing the true spirit of Christianity and its saving grace. This book seems to me a jewel of rare water cast up by the churning of the ocean of modern European society. The Bishop is the light of soul in the background that saves Jean Valjean and gives to human life itself an impulse towards the Divine. *Les Miserables* is a deep religious study demonstrating how the Christian spirit of religion can save man. Tolstoy is much heavier to read than Victor Hugo, for the latter is a poet, and has love as his theme, while in much of his work Tolstoy is a weary philosopher, more or less burdened with the weight of his own system of thought, which is not familiar with the rich glow of life of Self-Realization that comes through soul contact with a good Bishop of D———, and is full of the emptiness of the antiquated doctrines of Renunciation and social service. Without the phenomenon of conversion, as happened to Jean Valjean, this is a worse weariness of flesh than the previous life of sin and crime.

There is scarcely anything of the Holy Ghost coming in and displacing the carnality of man, in the productions of Tolstoy. Victor Hugo is more poetic, more spiritual, more religious than Tolstoy, who stands like a discipline-dried Hindu anchorite, annoyed with his own body and its filth, yet seeking salvation not in life, but in death.

Tolstoy did perceive the fragrance of faith in the simple life of the Russian peasant, and led by it, he attempted to interpret the Bible, but he was too intellectual to enter into the spirit of Christ. It is my belief that Victor Hugo understood Christ much better than Tolstoy. Tolstoy had something in him of Luther who, however sincere, was too shallow to understand the spirit of true Christianity. Tolstoy

and Luther wasted their great genius in trying to correct the errors of the grossly selfish society in which they were born. Alas ! many a precious life has been spent and lost in this thankless business of reforming the human beast, yet still one sickens at the sight of society and its carnal pursuits.

It was Goethe who first saw the loftiness of a truly Eastern intuition, and perceived the gleams that hide in the heart of the seers of Simrin. He appreciated the genius of the prophets and caught glimpses of the world of souls beyond the black curtain of death. He touched their gems and saw the beauty of their rare waters ; he was one of the best disciples of the West. From him arose again in Europe, and afterwards in America, the *Devan* of Hafiz and the *Ashram* of Kanva Rishi. In true devotion to Truth, and loftiness of imagination, Goethe is a modern prophet. His sympathy is so large and personal that he is a child amongst children and a king amongst men. The literature created by him is nearest in its effect to the Bible. It is the sermon of Renunciation in Love, " Do not abandon what you give away." His Faust is deeply spiritual and is the most wonderful study of the Máyá of Creation, and of the triumph of the " inner man " over the " outer." The Divine man, unlike mere man, is always victorious in his everlasting striving after God. Goethe has within him some traits of the character and personality known to us as *Krishna.*

Walt Whitman is a singular flower of America. His " leaves of grass " are light as the songs of birds. His largeness, his steady gaze on Reality, his unfailing joy of Self-Realization, his self-contradiction in the unbalanced yet balanced insanity of the Infinite, is

very refreshing. His greatest charm lies in the fact that he is neither a musician nor an artist; so he enjoys to himself his conversations with God, like Moses of old. Nothing is sufficient for him, so thirsty is he for the Infinite. His immensity breaks all conventions, and in him we find the true wildness of the poet. He had glimpses of cosmic consciousness, and in him alone, the human mind, so prone to indulge in analysis and explanation, even in poetry, is plunged again and again into the unknown wholeness of divine feeling. This wholeness of thought and feeling is most marvellous in Whitman, he eludes all analysis and passes over all differences. As in the hot deserts, wine is not so refreshing as a draught of cool well water, so in the vast desert of life the Tennysonian rhymes and metres are no match for the inspiring vital radiations of Whitmans' soul. What are poor measures of music? Such tunes as are sung by the mountain winds when they pass rustling through the pine forests, rarely rise from the art of a Wagner. We catch and tame wild birds for our table, and so we tame the music of life to some peculiar range of our ear. There is a poetic silence, which, in a word, in a smile, in a twinkle, gives more than volumes of well-woven verses. Ah, those well-woven poems! Let the whole lot sink to the bottom of the sea! They are veils on the face of God! To attempt to clothe deep feelings in the livery of rhyme is fatal, unless one is merely composing what is pretty.

There was once a master of music at Amritsar and as he heard within himself some tune that none else could hear, he roamed self-neglected, as one might say, insane and naked in music, descending only rarely to the human octave. He was lost in the Divine. We see the similarity of this sweet "in-

sanity" in Whitman, and poets of similar ecstacy and vision.

Edward Carpenter is heavy with intellectual mysticism. He is unnecessarily redundant. Overmuch thinking is a drawback to true poetry; thought-out thoughts are always heavy. Flashes alone constitute the strength of a great mind. Emerson and Carpenter, notwithstanding their grand flights, are, on the whole, not "light." Yet both are great expounders of the ancient wisdom of the West. They are learned and wise, erudite and scholarly, but we, of the East, ask for much more than that in true poetry.

Thoreau, on the other hand, is a breeze. His *Walden* and other works glisten with gems of true poetry scattered, as they are, in the wildness of the forest and the hill. Even "brown dried grass" glistens with a divine gleam under Thoreau's eyes, and the very mention by him of the meadow and the brook is poetry beyond all comparison.

Thomas à Kempis is the true disciple of the Bible; how his words overflow with true spirituality; what solace, what strength of faith, is in them! Yet his emphasis on sin and all that concerns it betrays vast ignorance.

Men living by the fountain of Life look different, have different tone and different colour from those who dwell there in mere imagination! Such is the difference between Truth itself and the mere intellectual knowledge of Truth.

All modern poetry is well-pruned ancient mythology, but by pruning it has been reduced to a neat littleness —gone is its vastness, its infinity of meaning, its unfathomable and unknown depths of life. Instead

of the giant pine forests of old we have the well-mown lawns with nothing superfluous; little does the modern mind appreciate that one live thought needs infinity of the "Superfluous" in order to grow.

(*ii*) *The Poetry of Japan*

Men-songs, not word-songs, that touch us and make us whole! Lyrical glances, where are they? Western literature, even that of song, enters into analysis; what we want is the higher inspiration of the Saviour-life to come and brighten our souls! We want actual living contact, words that burn and glow like the stars, that talk like men and raise the dead. All are men, yet all are not men. There are flowers everywhere, but few have in them the perfume of the Beloved.

The poetry of the temple bells of Kama Kuru and Nara, of the forest antelopes that come and gaze on the great bronze statue of the Buddha, Dai Butsu, is tranquil. There is no jarring in old Japan; it is all music of silence. In his quotations of the Japanese Hokku poems, Noguchi[1] puts before us the Hafizes of Persia wearing *Kimonos* and *Getas*. It is good to sit in the tea house under the shower of cherry petals and make light the burden of life. But the *Hokkus* or epigrams are little voices of the birds sitting on our trees. They are small, they have tiny nests in literature, but in the infinite sweep of poetry, we count our measures, not by syllables, "seven" or "nine," but by the mighty lines of the snowy peaks soaring into the blue. Noguchi has praised the little things, as it becomes him. The Japanese masters

[1] *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry*, Yone Noguchi (The Wisdom of the East Series).

of poetry are deeply religious in their ecstacy. Noguchi's denial of this fact when he says that the Japanese poetry is not " tormented by religion " is, apparently, but the utterance of a modern wish. If it were true, what is there in Japan or its art ?

What is Teaism but the æstheticism of Nirvana. What, for example, is the following, if not that " right contemplation " taught in the eight-fold path of Lord Buddha ?

I turned my face not to see flowers or leaves;
'Tis Autumn eve with the failing light.

How spiritual is the following, translated by Noguchi from one of the old masters :—

Lady : How my heart burns in madness and pain !
Oh, misery to be a prey to fire and unrest !
I am a wandering spirit of discontent from Hades
After the Life that ascends, the life of whiteness and the sun.
Oh ! My hatred of dissolution and death !

Priest : Who art thou, Lady !
Thou seemest to be a soul dead, but not dead,
Curser of Nirvana, straying soul of unrest.

Lady : Father, I am the spirit of the Morning Glory. . . .

Priest: Poor child, there is no life where is no death.
Death is nothing but the turn or change of note,
The shortest life is the sweetest, as is the shortest song! . . .

Lady: Happy am I to hear such words, holy father!
Pray, pray for my soul, that it may return to Hades and rest!

Priest: *Namo Amida Butsu.*

In his *Ideals of the East* Mr. Okakura Kakuzo quotes a poem of the Empress Komio:

"The nobility of soul of this great Empress Mother may be felt even in one of her simplest poems, when speaking of offering flowers to the Buddha, she says: 'If I pluck them, the thumb of my hand will defile, therefore, standing in the meadows as they are, I offer these wind-blown flowers to the Buddha of the Past, the Present, the Future,' or, again, in an outburst of passionate enthusiasm: 'The sound of the tools that are raising the images of Buddha, let it resound in Heaven! Let it rend the earth asunder! For the sake of the fathers; for the sake of the mothers; for the sake of all mankind.'"

It is this spirit in poetry that fascinates us. Okakura, himself, was a great poet who wrote no poetry, but whose flesh was made glorious by its spirit of Self-Realization. One day he was seated with me in my room in Tokyo, on a straw cushion placed for him on a bare Japanese mat-floor; he, a giant thinker, perhaps the greatest critic of the East, and I, a University student, welcoming him to my humble

place on behalf of India. He was rather tall for his race, and his poetic mind showed in his flesh like some high mountain peak gilded with the splendour of the rising Sun. I asked him : What is Life ? No reply came from the Master of Bijutsuen—The Academy of Japanese Art—he sat silent, but I saw the snow-peak in him rising higher and higher before my admiring gaze, reflecting the rising of the Sun with greater and greater glory, I saw him shine before me like the facets of a diamond and colours fell on me from its crystalline beauty in a flood of life. His Mongolian cheeks grew rosy like those of a blushing Persian maiden, and down them rolled from his closed eyes the pearl drops of ecstacy : and so time passed in songful silence, till suddenly Okakura seemed to grow large like mother Nature and to rise from his seat. He uplifted his arms, and raised his eyes, uttering broken words that still thrill me : " Down from below the mud, rising upward through the turgid waves of the waters of Maya, upon its stem seated invisible, seeking life from the depths and from the heights, the lotus rises higher and higher and yet higher, until it bursts out in the glory of its full blossom on the Blue Waters."

The glory of the full blossom ! And the Master closed his eyes again and was silent.

Buddhism permeates the art and poetry of Japan. I have seen the poets in Japan, man and nature mingle there in the shape of Fujiyama, in the stature of pine. Their rapture is pure, their minds are whole. There are still men there, unless the wheel of modern industry crush them to mere fragments. As a result of this mental calm and æsthetic rapture of religion, Japan is the " lightest " country of the world. Man and Nature sing but one music, that of His beauty.

These lines embody deep Buddhistic feeling :—

Oh ! how cool
The sound of the bell
That leaves the bell itself.

. . . . . .

Slow passing days
Gathered, gathering—
Alas, past far away, distant !

. . . . . .

The old pond !
A frog leapt into—
List, the water sound.

. . . . . .

Autumn's full moon !
Lo ! the shadows of a pine tree upon the water.

In the book already mentioned, Mr. Yone Noguchi says[1] :

" Three or four tea-masters, the æstheticists of all æstheticists, headed by famous Rikiu, were once invited by Kwanpaku Hidetsugu, a feudal lord of the sixteenth century, to his early morning tea ; the month was April, the day the twentieth, whose yearning mind was yet struggling to shake off the grey-haired winter's despotism. The dark breezes, like evil spirits who feared the approach of sun-light, were huddling around under the eaves of Hidetsugu's tea-house ; within there was no light. And the silence was complete ; then it was found that its old rhythm (' Oh, what a melody ! ') was now and then broken, no, emphasised, by the silver voice of the boiling tea-kettle. No one among the guests ever spoke, as the human tongue was thought to be out of place. The host, Kwanpaku Hidetsugu, was slow

[1] Quoted from *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry*, (1914) by kind permission of the publisher, Mr. John Murray.

to appear on the scene; what stepped in most informally, with no heralding, was the *Ariaki no Tsuki*, the faint shadow of the falling moon at early dawn, who came a thousand miles, through the perplexity of a thousand leaves, just enough to light a little, hanging by the Tokonoma, the *Shikishi* paper tablet on which the following *Uta*, poem, was written :

" ' Where a Cuckoo a-singing swayed,
I raised my face, alas, to see
The *Ariake no Tsuki* only remaining.'

All the guests were taken at once with admiration of the poem and the art of the calligrapher, famous Teika, who wrote it, and then of the art of the host, this feudal lord, whose æsthetic mind was minute and most fastidious in creating a particular atmosphere; and they soon agreed, but in silence, that the tea-party was especially held to introduce the poem or the calligrapher's art to them. And I should like to know where is a sweeter, more beautiful way than that to introduce the poem or picture to others; I should like to know where is a more beautiful, sweeter way than that to see or read the picture or poem. Great is the art of those old tea-masters who were the real poets of action."

Not as beautiful, but with a similar spirit of receptiveness, we find the Urdu Gazal-writers introducing their couplets with much ceremony into old Lucknow and Delhi.

(*iii*) *The Poetry of Persia*

Omar Khayyam is one of the most lovable Saints of the East. He is nothing if not transcendental; his wine is the " Tea-ism " of the Japanese Hokkuists.[1]

[1] c.f. Yone Noguchi: loc. lit.

The injustice done to our poet by an essentially epicurean world is due to a misunderstanding. The drinking of the cup, as a protest against the over-strict commandments of the Koran, was in the spirit of the times, the general sign of the real mystic conversion and the tavern was the mystic lodge. Our poet appears in a million moods; he does not know when he contradicts himself. What are poems but pictures of the transient postures of the mind against the background of the Infinite? Even if we read Omar in the original, we cannot grasp him, for he transcends his own words. The poet, however, can never be happy but in himself. His "wine" is divine inebriation, flowing to him from the eyes of his Beloved, the Divine teacher, who fills him with joy when his soul runs dry. Why should he philosophise on theism to prove himself a Saint. It is well that his poetry is agnostic when it goes towards the impersonal First Cause; all divine poetry must at least be honest. These poets can never get beyond the Love of the God-Personality which is symbolised by Khayyam and Hafiz in their beloved *Saki*.

"I seek the refuge of Buddha!" "I seek the refuge of Man. Salutations to Buddha!" "He is foolish who asks me what is God and more foolish is he who answers," was what Sakya Muni said. Guru Nanak never defines God; it is the Beloved, the Bridegroom. There is no theological God in life, nor in any true religion. It is wicked to interpret the "teaism"[1] of the Japanese as something secular.

[1] "There is a garden path called 'Roji' so to say, the passage into self-illumination, leading from the without to the within, that is to say, the tea house under the world-wearied grayness of age known trees, by the solitary granite lantern, solitary like a saint or a philosopher with the beacon light in heart; it is here that you have to forget the tumultuous seas of the world on which you must ride and play at moral equilibrium and slowly enter into the 'Teaism' or the joy of æstheticism."—Noguchi.

In the same way Omar Khayyam rapturously contented himself with a small pension and said : " My floor is paved with sins ! He is so great that His Mercy waits on me to wash me pure ! " Such a man can have no excitement beyond the joy of a tranquil soul.

We need not deny a man like Omar the physical aid to the soul's exuberance if he needs it so vitally, but, essentially, the lotus blooms for its blossom and Khayyam lives for his soul and not for his flesh. Hafiz, Tabrez and Omar fell into the habit of taking the wine cup to keep up their strength of faith. With them, wine is as simple a food as milk and rice is to the Brahmin. They are subtle and delicate in their worship of the Divine. Wine is to support them in the victory of faith. Their nerves are over-strung by appreciation of the Beautiful, and when there is a physical breakdown, they need wine to help themselves up again. It is a kind of staff on which they lean.

The general tone of Hafiz and Khayyam is soft, like the music of the expanse of Moonlight, sweet as honey, soothing and charméd. The haunting beauty of Persian poetry is akin to the Buddhist poetry of Japan.

Shams Tabrez, on the other hand, is free, positive and self-realized. He has not the hazy lifelessness of the Hindu Vedantist, such as we find in Tagore, but the vitality of Tulsidas and Surdas of the Hindi Poetry.

Persian poets, in general, are like the roses of Persia, fleeting companions, evanescent but glowing. They are Gods that have no shadow. The " wine-drenched " Khayyam burns within with the Light of the Face of the Beloved. With him the fire of wine is a symbol of a life of incessant prayer and inspiration.

Thoughts from Hafiz
(Freely Translated)

1

When I ask, do you love me ?
Your angry lips purse up like a flower, my love !
And you rebuke me, the word comes as a stinging bee ! It stings !
Your rebuke is my fortune,
It is Heaven itself blessing me,
From your ruby-red, honey-sweet mouth,
The bitter reply but sets off your loveliness.

2

If love says, drink !
My soul rise and drench with red wine all your white robes,
And question not,
For your entire destiny is in the Hands of Love,
And Love alone knows !

3

I knew not love is both life and death,
Now I am caught in the dangers of its depths.
O Saki ! Initiate me into the mystery of your cup of wine,
And teach me the secret of eternal joy !

4

If that beautiful Turk of Shiraz would but let me call her mine,
I would cast away the kingdom of Samarkand and Bokhara,
For the beauty of that tiny mole upon her blushing cheek.

5

I tried to hide my love,
But, ah me ! joy is bursting open the casket of
my heart,
O, Masters of Self ! come, help me,
That I may not break asunder !

6

These silver-limbed girls,
The Pehlvi-songsters of Persia ;
Condemn them not, Life is in their limbs,
The white-bearded priests know not the rhythm
of Beauty,
O Saki ! Rise and give these law-scorched priests
a taste of your fiery wine !

7

"We have no homes," say the Pehlvi-singing
girls,
"And it is not given us to tread the Path of
virtue,
O why blame us for being what we are,
When strong destiny ordains our ends—ours
as well as yours."

8

Let poverty grind my limbs,
But my mind is drowned in joy of the vision of
that beautiful girl,
Sweet thoughts lift me high in the heaven of pure
luxury.
Let me tell you, this is Alchemy of life,
It transmutes beggars into princes.

9

I do not say be pure or impure,
Drink deep and merrily pass the days in light, bright moods of joy,
And gaze intent at life, hiding your love for the evanescent glory of Creation that forever flies, in dumb joys of life,
And thus be yourself.

10

I fall, I rise, I have a hundred faults, but something precious glistens in me, it is I!
I am a favoured Being,
Doubt not, with all my faults,
I go straight to Paradise.

11

I drink oft, but what strange gladness fills the air to-day,
And what old familiar raptures and dreams come floating round the cup,
Ah! I do not see her, but she must be hovering, invisible, over my head,
For to-day I see the flash of her beauty in the Fire of the cup.

12

(*Hafiz was invited to visit the King of Bengal, but when he sailed for India, the pain of separation from Persia was so violent that he had to be taken back. The following is the general sense of his Gazal recited on that occasion*):

Sail back, sail back to the shores of Persia,
Sweet roses of Persia beguile well my time;

I need no other company,
I cannot bear the receptions from Golden Hindustan,
The very thought of grand honours awaiting me already sickens me,
What use to me, a poor man, is even the invitation of the king of Bengal,
For I seem to die when separated thus from Persia.
Sail back, sail back, to the shores of Persia !

. . . . . .

One moment of soul-sickness is worse than death,
And not for all the empire of lands and seas, would I exchange my little freedom.
Sail back, sail back to the shores of Persia !

13

No one knows the destination,
Enough is it that the bell of the Caravan rings every morn,
And the Caravan starts on !

14

This is all I ask of Fortune,
Ah ! that she would give me the key of the Temple of inspiration !

15

If in this world and the other,
I get even one brief moment with the Beloved,
I would weigh it more than both the worlds,
And treasure that moment as my Eternity.

16

Once again, O friends!
The wine-cup has cleansed me of the dirt of self,
The joy of the Saki has conquered me,
A thousand red odes I sing again of the wine,
For its fire has kissed away the pallor on my cheeks.

17

Boast not, O Priest! of thy wisdom,
For Aristotle dies, just as dies an unknown peasant.

18

I knew, long ago,
That the fatal beauty of Joseph, that glowed diviner and yet more divine with each day,
Would one day entice Zulieka beyond all restraints of virtue,
I knew it long ago!

19

I broke all my vows to God,
And I sinned against His laws,
But see, what Grace of Infinite forgiveness!
He comes, Himself, to my door to make peace with His slave.

20

Till I treasure not Her lovely form in my heart,
Till I clasp it not with rapt madness,
The tree of desire can bear no fruit within me.

21

How can we disciples think of going to Mecca ?
After all, say, how ?
When our Prophet has fixed his gaze on the Tavern,
And waits from there the rise of the red wine in His cup.

22

I asked her,
Of what avail are her ruby-lips to an old age-shivered man ?
She replied : " Their touch transmutes old age into youth."

23

I said to her,
" Think not of man, only of God."
She replied,
" On the ways of love, this too and that too."
I said to her,
" How light is the breeze that blows from Paradise ! "
She replied,
" How Life-giving is the breeze that blows from my heart to thine ! "

24

Thou art like Dawn, my love,
And I am the pale lamp flickering in the twilight,
But waft a smile towards me,
And, lo, I die with joy !

25

My own body doth cast a veil and a shadow on
the face of the Beloved,
Those moments only are true, when I can take
off this veil and see her.

26

If my blood gives forth the scent of Love,
Wonder not,
For it is my blood that also courses in the veins
of the musk-deer.

27

When the memory of thy face thrills the garden
of my eyes,
My soul peeps out of these windows to glance
at thee.

28

In the drunken reveries of the Tavern,
Where they see but the flow of wine,
I see the flow of the Light of God,
Wonder of wonders ! I see such a glory in such a
place !

29

Both the worlds, lower and higher,
Are but a burst of Her flame of Beauty,
I have said this often,
Both in private as well as in song,
But open this secret behind many a veil,
And it will be the song of all the thorough-
fares,

30

Not a jot less, not a jot more,
Perfection is the circle of Creation,
Not a word can be said,
Not a single why or wherefore uttered here.

31

On the path of love,
There lurk a thousand fates and dangers even
beyond death,
Never think
That, after death, the path is easy and clear.

32

I have found the way to the Treasure of the
Infinite Beauty of my love,
Now I will make a hundred beggars like myself,
rich as kings.

33

How can I be free,
And escape the pain of love,
When with every breath,
I find the ringlets of her tresses falling about my
ears ?

34

I have the ripe authority of the Givers of the
wine cup,
And the testimony of the ages,
That the wine is forbidden to those who have
not yet discovered Her in their soul.

35

Last night, while asleep,
I was floating down my dreams in the stream of my tears,
And in thy remembrance,
I was drawing thy portrait on the flowing waters.

36

I am proud of the prowess of my arms,
And grateful to my Master that they have not strength to injure man.

37

My head is reeling with pure rapture,
And I sing aloud like a Muezzin,
That the breeze of life blows to me from the wine-cup of love.

38

Every night I keep a watch on the Tower of my heart,
Perchance to see my Moon of Perfection passing across the sky above.

39

The perfume of thy presence tells me that thou art near,
And a hundred hopes rise in me and dance,
But who will ferry me across,
This river of my tears ?

40

On the tablet of my heart,
There is written but one Aliph[1] of her lovely stature,
This is the only Aliph I learnt,
The very first letter and it was the last,
For my teacher did not take me beyond.

41

My soul is a bird of Heaven,
Its nest is in the loftiest skies,
It is tired of the world,
And it flutters in the cage of the body,
As the window opens, it is on its wing,
And straight it flies to its own nest.

42

O Love! Thy lips enclose the fountain of everlasting life,
And all gardens wave in thy divine figure,
Thy face is the sun of the East,
Thy black tress is the musk-pod of life.

43

As thou dost pass through the garden,
The flowers blush in shame and tear their garments in the joy of thy Beauty.

(*iv*) *Modern Indian Poetry*

There is a very little modern poetry coming from Indians educated on the English system; we must

[1] The first letter of Arabic alphabet.

return to our ancient fountains, and get water from behind us.

Some years ago we had Tulsidas, Surdas, Miran Bai and others with us, but they are of the sacred regions of religious poetry, sacred beyond our imaginations.

Tulsi Ramayan is the greatest achievement in Hindi, the greatest solace of the Ganges plains. *Vinaya Patrika* of his prayers and songs is as tranquil as the Upnishdas of old and the hymns of Guru Grantha of modern days.

Sursagar, composed by Surdas, the blind lover of Krishna, has in it the perennial youth of love. He melts his soul into the soul of song and distils soul-fire that ignites even stones into flames singing with him.

In her few hymns Miran Bai sends the thrill of her soul across centuries. She is the woman who owns a saviour. She is a revolution in herself, as was Gargi of ancient Upnishadic India; subtle, transcendent, divine and luminous. She is fearless in her love. Mad elephants and angry snakes are to her but messengers with love-news from her Krishna. She owns nothing but the king of her soul—one staggers to contemplate the immensity of her rapture at the sight of the blue sky sprinkled with stars, for so is her Krishna. She enters freely the realms of the unseen and plays with the celestials. No other woman dared so much to find herself. Her poetry is the divine word of the Mother; it nourishes, uplifts, and makes men holy.

There is no Hindi poet of any power in modern India. Sufficient, however, are the vast treasures they have from their ancestors of the immediate past.

Brij Bhasha is a Hindi dialect so well adapted for poetry, that put any vowels and consonants of Brij

Bhasha together and you have a sound poem of real merit. The tale of Krishna and Gopikas inspire the dwellers of the Gangetic plains. But in distant Punjab, its word-music attracted the great Guru Gobind Singh and that prophet-poet gave us his poems, mostly in Brij Bhasha. The Hindi-speaking world can well be proud of that treasure of theirs from the "city of joy," Anandapore. There is *Krishna Lila* from the pen of Guru Gobind Singh in Dasam Grantha. There is *Ramayana* in brief. Hindi poetry without Rama, Krishna and Radha may be anything but poetry.

Modern Bengal is the scene of higher culture in India. It is a learned province, all kinds of wisdom being packed in the brain of the Bengali. Generally speaking, the educated amongst them are walking libraries and museums. With that pride of learning and research which such scholarship produces in man, it asserts in season and out of season, through its art and literature, a certain Anglo-Saxon air of superiority over people of the other Indian provinces and swamps them. Bengal is very self-conscious, somewhat vain, clannish and inhospitable, though it has about it a glare of magical brilliance. Its poetry is more or less hybrid—the result of over much culture, a thing of imitative assimilation of other people's knowledge.

Five centuries ago we had the real Indian Bengal as distinguished from the modern learned Bengal, with a galaxy of Vaishnava poets like Chandi Das. Vaishnavism is the greatest thing Bengal ever had had; compared with that great spiritual awakening, modern religious movements like the Brahmo Samaj, are as the flickering of tiny lamps in the daylight.

And what could new Bengal give us in place of Lord Gauranga? Ram Mohan Rai and Tagores are

mere broken fragments of the light that he shed forth.

In modern Bengal, apart from a few song-sayings of Shri Ram Krishna Parmahansa, there is but little life-giving literature.

Here is what Sister Nivedita records about Ram Krishna Paramahansa in her fascinating book, *The Master as I saw Him* : . . . " When he came out into the garden at Cossipore, and placed his hand on the heads of a row of persons, one after another, saying in one case : ' Aj Thak ! ' ' To-day let be ! ' In another, ' Chaitanya houk ! ' ' Be awakened ! ' and so on. And after this, a different gift came to each one thus blessed. In one there awoke an infinite sorrow. To another everything about him became symbolic and suggested ideas. With a third, the benediction was realized as overwhelming bliss. . . ."

This is the master touch. Here was a man in Bengal perfected : all others are below him, mere scribes, the whole of Bengal's literary men. This great man was a creator and a poet in the real sense.

Elsewhere she says : " His perceptions were so fine that he could tell by touch the character of anyone who might have come in contact with his food, his clothes or his mat. It ' burnt ' him, he said, of an impress from which he shrank ; or, on another occasion, ' Look ! I can eat this. The sender must have been some good soul.' . . . ."

The facts about this great spiritual character given in the above few lines are those of a true Nami Faqir—the highest type of man, as we disciples believe. And how Rama Krishna himself was made ?

Writing about Swami Viveka Nanda, Sister Vivedita says : " This largeness and sweetness of outlook was firmly based on his reverence for his own Guru. ' Mine is the devotion of the dog ! ' he exclaimed. ' I

don't want to know why ! I am contented simply to follow ! and Sri Ram Krishna, in his turn, had had similar feeling for Tota Puri—that Great Master who had left his own disciples at Kaithal near Umballa one day, to go into Lower Bengal where said he 'I feel that a soul needs me.' He had gone to his people again, when his work was done at Dakshineshwar, and his grave in the North-West is honoured to this day. But he whom he had initiated felt for him, even after a reverence so great that he would not even utter his name, 'Nangta, the Naked One, said unto me'—was his customary way of referring to him."

This is the disciple of the man before whose feet we fall to understand life. His touch makes us poets. Poetry is in the ashes of his Dhuni. Ram Krishna Paramahansa was the man-creator, as all religious genius is. I do not find any spiritual light on the surface of Bengal, except what once burnt at Dakshneshwar and then shone for a while in Swami Viveka Nanda, the inspired preacher of Rama Krishna Paramahansa.

The confluence of the East and the West took place in such great minds as that of Bankim, Hemchandra, Girish Ghosh and others.

In Rabindra Nath Tagore, especially, it has produced a highly fascinating quintessence of transcendental poetry which has rightly taken the world by storm, because of Tagore's pure and powerful blending of both the East and the West in his extraordinary and highly gifted personality. He is full of the Pure, the Pure of art, music, and dramatic pose. It would be of interest to note that Tagore's subtle fascination of half-mystic pain of love had been forestalled by the Persian and Urdu Masters of the Gazal style, such as Galib and Mir, and like him they, too, have in their verse that weird suggestiveness that

haunts us and hovers over the horizon of our mind in a perpetual desire for nothing.

Tagore, at the expense of sword-like intensity in that personal devotion to God that came to Rama Krishna Paramahansa or Lord Gauranga, before the Paramahansa in Bengal, or to Mira Bai, the Queen of Marwar, has taken to vague universalities of impersonal thought which, though beautiful and highly popular in form and rhythm, are barren in the sense in which we Orientals regard Word as life-giving, the living, mystic Word that stands such infinite repetition. He is still sounding the waters of intellect like Emerson. Tagore rewrites the ancient wisdom of the Hindus in little places and makes it glow thereby, by the very process of chipping the old log ; but he is weak in his effort to abstract truth for the world in convenient popular forms

Goethe and Emerson were much too abstruse in their interpretation of the spirit of Eastern literature, and Fitzgerald made Omar Khayyam a symbol of sensuous pleasure. Tired of these two extremes, Europe discovers in Tagore's exquisite perfume of phrase and thought a newness which it did not find in Emerson or Goethe.

Even as Christianity lost all its glow and symbolic grandeur of faith in modern Protestantism and its Puritanic pretence, so have all religions lost in Tagore's unitarian poetry their inner power of personal and lyrical devotion to a life-giving Master, which alone is the way to faith and life. " Follow me and ye shall have everlasting life." All religions vanish in Tagore, leaving the colours of the evening, the flow of rivers, the hush of night and the twinkle of stars to us, a veritable wilderness in which I should suffocate were I left alone overnight without love and faith—virtues which are not sane without a personal God.

Tagore lacks, and it is a great lack, the Saki of Omar and Hafiz, without which all poetry and philosophy is weariness of flesh. Tagore lacks the spirit of the practice of Brahmavidya of the Upnishadas that was always imparted from bosom to bosom, like a spark of fire from torch to torch. "Life begetteth life." There is no strong personality in his verse. Brahmo Samaj does not believe in Guru, as did Ram Krishna and Viveka Nanda.

The spiritual vein that we find in Tagore and which, at times, touches some of our deepest chords, is due more to the Vaishnava inheritance of the intense personal Bhakti of Lord Gauranga, than to his unitarian culture or to his study of the Upnishadas. Only those verses of Tagore are at all intense in which he sings of the Master, the King, God's personality, which is the life of all religions. Here alone is he at his best.

This one thing, the *Saki* of Omar and Hafiz, which is the secret of all true spiritual lyrics, seems absent in Tagore's verse, and he fails to see that it is in life, not in any philosophical abstractions, that the meeting of Christ and Mary Magdelen takes place, that meeting which is the highest verity of religion and poetry. Impersonal thought is always weak.

Rabindra Nath Tagore is a beautiful illusion of many minds and resembles none in particular. Like Tennyson, his originality is of the lion eating other people's flesh and making it his own. The Upnishadas feed him and Upnishadas come out of him. The million poetic voices of the streets of India enter into him and become a strange music for the whole world. He is the sweetest and ablest interpretor that the Hindu philosophy has captured. He is rare, the product of centuries.

Tagore is not so bold a thinker on spiritual matters

as Viveka Nanda Swami or Rama Krishna Paramahansa. His vague and mystic suggestiveness is good preaching, but he creates no life ; he pleases and enthrals, but there it ends. His poetry has not enough blood to inspire in another something like itself. It exhausts its own suggestion in beautiful vagueness, in charming inaccessibility, in evanescent beauty. Viveka Nanda Swami, of Bengal, a great, bold brother of man, a ringing man, though not as artistic or polished, perhaps not so international as Tagore, passes into the very heart of man. He is uncouth compared to Tagore, but his uncouthness has strength, passion and an infinite enterprise of faith. He is a greater poet than Tagore in his savage intensity of emotion. Viveka Nanda is strong with the authority to preach that his Master gave him, and he preaches. One moonlit night, while walking alone in one of his Himalayan resorts, the Swami was approached by Miss Margaret Noble for the gift of blessings that the ancient monks of India are famed for bestowing. The disciple of his Master, in the name of Rama Krishna Parmahansa, his Guru, looked at her, spread his hand over her head and changed her whole life by that lyrical touch. Out of this noble Irish woman, the Swami created the devoted disciple Nevedita of Ram Krishna. Vikeka Nanda is in touch with the higher spiritual worlds, is a Faqir, while Tagore realizes the shadows of this little world of matter we see and sense into very gods. Tagore is a creator of poems, Viveka Nanda of poets.

The poems of Mrs. Naidu, a bright Bengali, are full of the sweetness of life's romance. It is a pity she has cast in her lot with that class who love to remain all their life mere school boys and girls and treat the world as a debating club where poems can be read,

songs sung, and politics discussed endlessly. This class is growing apace in the empty world and calls itself the class of public workers; she fills a place there with joy. In her poetry, she is more Persian and Urduic in her style than Bengali, the child of spring that catches notes from the throats of birds! There is a dance in her words which reminds one of Shelley. In her silence and *Dhyanam*, not as poetic as Toru Dutt, there is a dream in her eyes that keeps her heart burning with the joys of life. Her music is intoxicating. We have lost a crystal stream of passionate verse in the dryness of Indian politics: one more life lost for eradicating the political wickedness of men.

Another Vedantic thinker has risen in new Bengal, known as Ananda-Acharya. His *Book of the Cave* is a distinct message of ancient Hinduism. There is not a single character in the writings of Tagore resembling "The Cave Dweller." Tagore has brought out a universally acceptable spiritual tone, but Ananda-Acharya has done better in this book, by giving us at least one good man behind the scenes. The poet revels like the Vedic poets in answers to the eternal question: Who am I? And the poem from which extracts are quoted below[1] is one rapturous translation of some of the most glorious poetry of the Vedas, something fresh, though at places it carries with it a classic staleness, relieved instantaneously by the Vaishnava emotion inherited by the modern Bengali. But the poet in his later productions is losing himself in the Hindu high-priest of Vedanta, a philosophy which is much too speculative to be beaten into anyone's religion, at least on this dualistic material plane.

[1] *The Book of the Cave*, Ananda-Acharya, quotations from which are by the kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd.

I am the Unnamed and the Unnameable One!
I am not of the kin of the shadows who spin the rolling globes of Time and Space!

. . . . . .

I heard the roar of the red bull, bellowing for the kine through heaven and earth, have ye heard the echo of his roar?

The Swan sitteth with one foot in the ocean and one foot in the ether; so easily doth he move that the swiftest runner cannot overtake him. If he lift up his foot from out the waters—the day will die, the night will be no more. Have ye given milk to the Swan?

. . . . . .

The cow brought forth her calf; and the young one was fain to stand and suck the mother, but he fell to the ground again and yet again. And the mother licked the calf. I stood wishing the calf to rise again, for I knew: Great is the strength of that which is yet to be full-grown.

The red hawk, descending from the firmament on still, spread wings, beholdeth the rising clouds and hideth behind the shadows of the lonely peaks. Ye have not seen his glowing eyes.

. . . . . .

Ye have not seen the trembling of the firmament when the fire of His wrath smiteth the air.

The wandering cloud-mare of the skies is tethered to the indestructible ether; ye have not seen the earth-foal drawing its milk from her. In that moist place, blessed by the droppings of the sacred milk, the Tree of Heaven sprung up and spreads its branches.

. . . . . .

> Ye have not seen the two Friends—who are pleasant as two fortunate days, longing as two oxen for pasture, affectionate as two parents, smiting as two maddened elephants smiting the foe, bright as two water-born jewels, swift as two flying birds with forms like the mind-born moon, sweet-voiced as two sounding clouds, honey-mouthed as two golden bees, fierce as two blazing forest-fires, magnanimous as two princes hastening to give protection, toiling as two labourers bathed in sweat, pleasing to the eyes as two luminaries in the clear heavens.
>
> . . . . . .

The Marble Palace and its Guide, in *The Book of the Cave*, has the familiar atmosphere of visions given of the after-life. The descriptions are much too archaic, and the poet has failed in his paintings. It is these visions when seen by oneself that constitute the religion of a man, religion in Carlyle's sense of the word. To found a liberal religion upon the intellectual chaff of *Sadhana*, or of Emerson's essays, is to lead humanity like a blind-folded bull yoked to the Persian wheel revolving endlessly in a circle, while the waters of life flow out of the well and all drink but the deluded bull.

The poetry of Ananda Charya is steeped in deeper and intenser colours of Eastern spiritual life than the universal unitarianism of Tagore. Tagore represents the modern religious revival of Bengal-Brahmaism, while Ananda Charya is an old Hindu type, a mixture of wisdom and superstition. A poetic superstition is essential in such mystic forms of thought concerning worlds beyond death. Ananda Charaya is harping still on the old obsolete theme of Sanyasa, praising

those sleeping and weeping willows, the Sanyasins, who sip Ganges water and swear at God.

Christian Europe disgusted, not with Christianity, but with its own anti-Christian mentality, finds a new solace in Tagore, as he chants the blended poetry of the Bible and the Upnishadas in a wondrous, exquisite, entrancing melody. On the whole, the modern movement for making all creeds into one liberal religion, seeking unity of feeling in one shapeless, faceless, universal God, wide as earth and academic as Science itself, lacks the intensity of personal devotion that was, say in Lord Gauranga, and which can never be inspired by such academic means. We want some invisible figures like the "Cave Dwellers," and we want "The atmosphere of the marble palace," absorbable by the subliminal self in order that true religion may drive its roots into the depths of our being. For true religious development, we need at times all the grossest superstitions and crudest mythologies that these gentlemen are busy in sweeping clean away. What Tagore and other universalists and worshippers of unity in God and Humanity—a huge Myth by itself—aim at, is like the visible, pretty effect of a bunch of flowers growing in a vase full of chemical solutions. Much that we call thoughts are the flashes of light that hover round the roof of the *Gauri Shanker Guha*, and are always caught and never created by a systematic intellectual process. Spinoza could never get ecstacy from Tagore, but he would be intoxicated with Ramayana!

Without communion with the living man, all religion and philosophy are dead and poetry is meaningless. If this is what Ananda Acharya means in his *Book of the Cave*, he has written this piece better than Tagore, though in the exquisite language and rythm of his rich lyrics, the sweet and sane Tagore will

forever remain unsurpassed as the master of style and pose. Ananda Acharaya is crude, in places clumsy, often ostentatious and redundant and extraordinarily commonplace.

. . . . . .

The corner stone of religious life is faith in the celestial Realms where our destinies are shaped by those emancipated ones, who, having toiled through ages, have won the freedom of soul.

A religion without faith or vision, like that of Dante or Kabir, is chaff that death shall burn up as dried grass. To us, mere literature, however melodious, is trash, unless it has within it the companionship of the Word, as we find in the mere touch of the verses of the Bible and Guru Grantha. Mere brilliance is restlessness of genius that marks only a passing phase of a great personality in the making. The perfected man is the true poet, his dumb look is a song that nothing else can equal.

Urdu poets such as Mir, Galib and Zauk, are imitators of their elder Persian brethren. The latter were, without exception, large and spiritual, while the Urdu poets are, more or less, miserable and small, at best metaphysical, in places revelling in the subtle but empty music of pantheism. The best of them, such as Galib and Mir Minai, are writers of poetic epigrams like the Hokku poets of Japan, small, bright note-composers. Like Hokku poets, they recite a couplet with great artistic ceremony, and the poet himself, while reciting, becomes the picture of the idea expressed. It is remarkable that Urdu literature has some of the best songs in a single brief couplet. As I listened on one occasion to a great singer, an old man about seventy, rich with the glow of Urdu poetry, I felt the charms of his verse, it seized my heart and

set fire to it with the spark of beauty, where it burnt with desire and wistful longings. After hours of satiation, listening to the ever-haunting music of Urdu *Gazals*, after hours of burning I felt they had robbed my bosom of that cooling life-giving peace which I had earned in the morning by reciting *Sukhamani* of the glorious Guru Arjun Deva. I felt, through this vivid contrast, that Urdu verse, like all other world-poetry, is heavy with the sadness and wistfulness of unfulfilled desire. It is as charming as a wonderful beauty in distress. Hali's poetry is painful preaching in verse, not much poetry. His subjects are, social reform, widows, patriotism and such things! Molana Mohammed Hussain Azad, of Lahore, gave a new colour to the Urdu poetry. His later writings are deeply mystical. He was the first to mingle Western ways of expression with the Urdu, a process which has been better carried out since by Iqbal, of Lahore. There is something of an English style in Urdu, and in other literature all over India.

Urdu poetry is a curious artistic work, the verses inter-woven like cob-webs glistening with dew. Its youth was surrounded by the glamours of the later Moghul court, and it reflects the lamp-light imagery that moved at night behind the curtains. Of all literatures it has the swiftest moments, sensing the unreality of the dancing, vanishing feet, of half-revealed and the half-concealed faces and forms. The Urdu poets are hypnotists, and few ears can resist the fascination of their wistful music. After all, it is *Maya*, of the Moghul Court, that seduced the Moghul and Moslem chivalry, faith, power and inspiration, and took it to the singing of the delicate Urdu rhymes!

Urdu has no outstanding work of inspiration to be compared with Tulsi Das's *Ramayana*.

Nazir, of Akbarabad, is the poet of the masses. He is wild, inconsistent, huge like nature itself, at times crude, impure, filthy like the slums of the wretched. His rhymes jostle against one another in amazing profusion, crowding out everything but the joy of life. The "cucumbers of Agra," the "porous earthen pitcher fresh from the kiln that gives cold water in the summer," "the kite flying," "pigeon keeping," "taming of pet animals such as bears, monkeys and goats," "the sale of pets like squirrels, parrots, bulbuls"—all such subjects he puts on the strings of his musical instrument and casts as a song into the life and habits of the people, cheering them in their sorrow and vice. The sudden showers of monsoon, after hot months, set both peacocks and Nazir dancing: the river Jamuna and Agra men swimming in it with bare bodies inspires a long poem; he cries in joy at the rich white of the moonlight; in his own language he beats the music of Swinburne's verse so glowing, so flowing is his natural simple music. Of all the Urdu Poets he is original, sympathetic, free, rich and self-realized.

One day Nazir has the little bear in the Bazaar adorned with ear-rings and a clasp made of pearls and coral, and he himself goes dressed as a juggler with a club in hand, and he makes his bear dance as he sings in the thoroughfare. The motley crowd collects around him. The next day Nazir has changed his dress and is selling pet birds and squirrels like a fowler, saying: "How well my bulbuls fight!" "How beautiful are these little squirrels!" To-day he is in a large palace, to-morrow in the wretched room of a harlot, trying to see if she can be revived by a song. He finds equal joy in living with saints and women of the street, and is indifferent to all social conventions. His sympathy is so living and large, that

his language has that rare admixture of Hindi words which the more academic Urdu poets so studiously avoid. It is a strange perversity of Islamic brotherhood that the Urdu poets of India, mostly Moslem by religion, import the heat of Arabian deserts, as well as Arabic and Persian words to make their songs look Moslem and not Hindu! Iqbal, in his pan-Islamic dream, has given up Urdu and writes in Persian! Nazir's language is of the people and he sings as joyously of the Moslem as of the Hindu. He sings of Shiva's wedding, of Krishna's life and sport and art; he sings the praise of Guru Nanak in Sikh words; he sings alike of the Hindu and the Moslem festivals. Nothing escapes him. His caste is of joy, his religion a universal sympathy. He is free in his thought and life of all the sad limitations of theological narrow-mindedness miscalled religion that everywhere mar Indian manhood.

Nazir approaches nearest to Walt Whitman. His passion for the masses is unequalled and unsurpassed by any other Hindu or Urdu poet.

The unshackled freedom of Nazir's poetry is very rare, and the true value of Nazir lies in this, despite his occasional grossness. Possibly, instead of refusing a place to vice, he gives it an equal place with virtue, as so far as it contributes to the mass-life of man. After all, he boldly tears aside the veil of each and looks at vice as he looks at virtue, saying nothing more for one than for the other.

Nazir refuses to present in his verse dainty selections from the Book of Life. He paints the character of a saint with the same glowing hilarity of soul as that with which he gives us the crude and miserable life of the Nautch-girl and her lovers. His language grows divine with the former and vulgar with the latter. The river of life flows through his verse, now clean,

now muddy, but the sunlight of Nazir's poetry falls on it equally, beautiful reflections from one or no reflection from the other are merely accidental.

It is for this "fault," and the "fault" of his language straying into a hundred Indian dialects in sympathy with the feelings of as many peoples and religions in India, that Urdu critics decry Nazir and put above him the Tennysons of Urdu language like Mir, Galib, and Zauk.

Of all Urdu poets I think Nazir is truly poetic, a Faqir, a master whose ethics aim at making man and whose faith in the original purity of life never trembles at the sight of vice. Laughing at it, joking with it, he passes it by like a jolly good fellow.

Some Free Translations From Nazir

The Lady of the Moonlight

That night in the garden, the moonlight was overflowing the floors of the garden, as never it did before!
The night was white, the floor was bright and the spaces swam in this silver flood!
And the Moon was tossing tipsy on the billows of this white sea!

That night in the garden came she, the flower-limbed Lady of the Moonlight in her white dress interwoven with silver and gold, and as she came every thread of her garment caught fire from the moonlight, and there she stood, blazing from head to foot, a greater moonlight!

That night perchance she and I were alone,
It was the night of love, of kisses, of wine-cups,
It was the night of meeting, of pleasure, of rippling
laughter and the old, old music of speech!

Just when I was lost in her and she in me,
Just then the cock crew, the day dawned, the
bells rang, the flowers woke, the wind blew,
And she stole from my side, God knows where!
And I was left alone, with all my desires dead
within me!

That night in the garden, how all went well, and
pleasure upon pleasure came flooding!
How the colours and shades played on the silver
billows of the moonlight!
And how the crystal goblets glistened and how
the wine flowed!
I was drunk with the intoxicating thought of
her, and she was half-asleep in dreams of me,
How her bosom heaved with a hundred quivering
amours, our eyes gazed into each other and
said a thousand things in a look!
Ah! in such a concourse of joy, the rolling sky
threw a few stones,
Just when I was lost in her and she in me,
Just then the cock crew, the day dawned, the
bells rang, the flowers woke, the winds blew,
And she stole from my side, God knows where!
And I was left alone, with all my desires dead
within me!

That night in the garden there shone the moon
gracing the lap of the sky,
And here shone she, greater than the moon, in
my arms,

There was joy in her heart, there was joy in mine,
and our souls melted into each other's!
In our hands we held the goblets of the roseate wine,
In our eyes was the red infatuation of love,
My lips quivered with passion and touched hers,
her lips replied and came and touched mine
My bosom was locked in her's and her bosom was locked in mine!
Just when I was lost in her and she in me,
Just then the cock crew, the day dawned, the bells rang, the flowers woke, the wind blew,
And she stole from my side, God knows where!
And I was left alone with all my desires dead within me!

That night in the garden, how gay, O God! was the joy-drunk moon!
And the branches of the trees were swaying, waved by the dreamy stream of moonlight!
How by my side she sat, the iridescent lady of the moonlight, flaunting her braids out, and as she spoke her hair shook round her brow,
And with her honey lips she rebuked me for loving her!

I sat drinking her face, her speech, and drinking the cups of wine she gave me,
The rolling sky could not bear all this with peace,
All this joy of our meeting was too much, too much for it,
And there came from its bow the arrow of morn flying upon us.
Just when I was lost in her and she in me,
Just then the cock crew, the day dawned, the bells rang, the flowers woke, the wind blew,

And she stole from my side, God knows where!
And I was left alone, with all my desires dead within me!

The Song of the Virgin, Red Earthen Pitcher

The virgin, red earthen pitcher looks like a bush of red roses, full red blown!
The buds of life expand in the red cool light it sheds!
How cooling is the song of the pitcher, as it talks to water and the water talks to it, when they first meet!
Ah! the buds of life expand at the sight of the virgin, red earthen pitcher.
And the parched skin is renovated by very thought of it.
The cool, cool life-giving draught that is in it!
Wondrous is the red earthen pitcher of Agra!

By the touch of the virgin, pure vessel, the very water has changed its caste!
The water by its touch becomes the water of life;
O! Why and where did Alexander go seeking the water of life, when the red earthen pitcher is full of it, at Agra.
Ah! the buds of life expand at the sight of the virgin, red earthen pitcher!
And the parched skin is renovated by very thought of it!
The cool, cool life-giving draught that is in it!
Wondrous is the red earthen pitcher of Agra!

Ah! The red earthen pitcher that she carries!
That water-carrier that goes there!
It has a mysterious attraction for me!

The woman with her red, virgin pitcher, as she goes to Jamuna, takes unaware my heart wrapped in the sound of her foot-falls !
I tried but I could not go away,
I returned to her to look at her blazing, virgin pitcher !
And my mind began turning pure and impure,
She carries my heart as she carries her pitcher, and she tosses it as she tosses her pitcher aloft, as she goes to Jamuna to fill her red earthen pitcher,
Ah ! the buds of life expand at the sight of the virgin, red earthen pitcher !
And the parched skin is renovated by very thought of it !
The cool, cool life-giving draught that is in it !
Wondrous is the red earthen pitcher of Agra !

That little pitcher of mine !
I bought it for one anna, one anna only,
And I make the song of the pitcher now,
These little, sweet folk tales and notes that I have composed round my pitcher,
And I scatter my song of pitcher wherever the red earthen pitchers assemble !
Ah ! the buds of life expand at the sight of the virgin red earthen pitcher !
And the parched skin is renovated by very thought of it !
The cool, cool life-giving draught that is in it !
Wondrous is the red earthen pitcher of Agra !

The virgin, red earthen pitcher !
The angels gather round it,
It adorns all sacred occasions,

It celebrates all joy of man, be it a new building, a wedding, or a glorious birth !
It is the purest offering of man to gods,
The disciple meets his master by the red earthen pitcher !
The husband and the wife live round it, it is the solemn pledge of self-sacrifice !
And the youthful maidens carry them about, flaunting the fragrance of the nectar-full red earthen pitcher,
Ah ! the buds of life expand at the sight of the virgin, red earthen pitcher !
And the parched skin is renovated by very thought of it !
The cool, cool, life-giving draught that is in it !
Wondrous is the red earthen pitcher of Agra !

In a beautiful poem called *The Orange* Nazir sings :

The oranges are in fruit !
And the green, green leaves !
The blue sky spreads above !
But no orange at all compares !
With the oranges that she has, the full-grown girl of Agra !

The world swarms under the orange trees, the green leaves and the golden fruits !
I love but to look at her, the full-grown girl of Agra !
I love the shade of this exquisite tree of Beauty !
I care not for flowers,
I care not for fruits,
I love but to look at the full-grown girl of Agra !

The gardens are gay,
The perfume of ripeness flies,
I care not for gardens,
I care not for the sky,
I love but to look at her, the full-grown girl of Agra !

Oh ! When she said, " Come to me, Nazir ! "
I leaped like a flame, I cried like a song !
I thanked my God for the orange-word she gave me !
And I lay my Earth and Heaven at her feet !
I care not for life,
I care not for death,
I love but to look at her, the full-grown girl of Agra !

This is one of the Spirituals of Nazir

The Life of Spirit

What higher knowledge they who know Him have learned at His feet !
For they read what has never been writ,
And they understand what has never been uttered,
And, deep immersed in the music of life, their very breath is rhythmic,
Their heart-strings sound like the chords of a hundred *Sitars !*
And their bodies vibrate, beating time to the Eternal !
And all their limbs move in tune with Him, like a hundred instruments in harmonious vibration !

All music fades before their musical life,
All feelings pale before their simple sense of song !
Theirs alone is music, rich with the dye of soul !
Theirs alone is life, ringing with the light of Truth,
Theirs alone is the dance of life, above all notes and chords,
And they dance beyond all the sounds of strings and bagpipes ; and the leaves and the trees, the air, the water, and the stars dance with them !

As they raise the pitch of their song,
The bands break, the *Sitar*-strings are lost !
And as the clinking anklets of the dancers stop, the dancers pass into the very soul of music and, self-realized, the dancers stand motionless, mad as music itself !
Ah ! This is not what we know as music, it is the life slipping from Earth into Heaven of celestials, it is not music, it is a gathering of angels.
Ah Nazir ! you can realize this life of spirit above all measures of earthly dance and song, feeling and thought !

As I gather myself out of myself, the very hands slip off from the hands, and the feet draw out of the feet, and the eyes withdraw from the eyes,
Ah ! all dancing was for this gathering of myself inward, in myself !
In the inner gathering of self, I sparkle without the rays of gems, and I attract all, without any gay attires and without lifting my hands and feet, I myself am the whole expression of song !

I had begun to dance and to sing for the pleasure
of the Beloved, for a glimpse of Him !
And when He came and sat within me, suddenly
I lost the measure of my dance, out of tune
went my song, thrilling the air ;
And His Beauty filled my eyes, my heart, my
head, and I was fainting away, far away !
And the light of me was blending with the light
that is He !
It was death in love !
Ah ! I knew not if I had a body !
This was when the last note was struck on
the drum of my heart and He entered
me !
I had broken off, I had broken off !
My mind was lost in wonder, in wonder !
And time had ended in the Timeless.

Ah ! Nazir ! tell me who danced here ?
And who saw the dance ?
Who was singing here ?
And who heard the song ?
The dew drop had slipped into the sea !
And this was the end of all art !
It was the perfection of love and life !
All music fades before their musical life,
All feelings pale before their simple song !
Theirs alone is music, rich with the dye of soul !
Theirs alone is life, ringing with the light of
Truth !
Theirs alone is the dance of life, above all notes
and chords,
And they dance beyond all the sound of strings
and bagpipes ; and the leaves and the trees,
the air, the water and the stars dance with
them !

Here is another Spiritual by Nazir :

East and West, North and South,
I see nothing but Flower gardens of the Beloved ;
He is weaving dreams in grass, and writing His songs in opening buds !
Seeing Him at work and at rest, I am quiet !
Joy plucks the chords of my heart and I live, believing that He is !
He is a Master of all gifts and He is the Beauteous Giver to all !
They are gay, all hours of night and day
The rippling laughter rolls in their soul !
And all moments pass in the richest joy !
For when they seek the way of love
And turn *Faqirs*,
No grief can mar their way,
No sorrow can stain their heart,
They are free ! free !
All luxury, all peace, all joy, all exaltation of spirit, all satiety of soul, is theirs !
For He showers on them His love, His beauty, His favour and His grace fulfils all desires !

When the floods of love rush out of my heart and flow everywhere in the supreme glow,
To me every night is as the wedding night !
And every day a New Year's Day !
I bloom like the full coloured rose !
From the day I knew Him, I have had no leisure from the joy of His presence,
My lips vibrate invisibly with some unknown music,
And my hands beat time with the rhythm of the Eternal.
Every day it is spring for me,

Every day it is Holi[1] festival
Every day is my Deewali.[2]

They are gay, all hours of night and day
The rippling laughter rolls in their soul!
And all moments pass in the richest joy!
For when they seek the way of love,
And turn *Faqirs*,
No grief can mar their way,
No sorrow can stain their heart,
They are free! free!
All luxury, all peace, all joy, all exaltation of spirit, all satiety of soul is theirs!
For He showers on them His love, His beauty, His favour, and His grace fulfils all desires!

You know not, O people! My Master, who has fascinated me,
He is the best Beloved, the highest, the truest, the sweetest,
He has given me my life,
He has fed me with milk,
He has nourished me with joy,
He has satiated me with Himself,
By His love, I have the heart of a child, knowing naught, learning naught,
And yet His love is all knowledge,
Oh! no one can understand me!
Oh! How can I tell?
I have forgotten the world and its contents, the teacher, the pupil, the city and the wilderness,
I know not suffering, I know not pain nor prison,

[1] Indian festival of dyes and colours.
[2] The festival of lamps.

What is tyranny? What is poverty? What justice or injustice?
They are gay, all hours of night and day
The rippling laughter rolls in their soul!
And all moments pass in the richest joy!
For when they seek the way of love,
And turn *Faqirs*,
No grief can mar their way,
No sorrow can stain their heart,
They are free! free!
All luxury, all peace, all joy, all exaltation of spirit, all satiety of soul is theirs!
For He showers on them His love, His beauty, His favour, and His grace fulfils all desires!

I cherish in my little heart the infinite, the Eternal,
And there is no room for another!
I live on the road to Him, I know no other road,
The same is death and life to me,
Where I and He live both together,
Kingdoms lie as dust there!
No weeping there, no gnashing, no fear, no doubt no dismay!
Freedom! Freedom! freer, freer joy,
Day and night is the cool sound of the bubbling fountains of life within!
And love inspires both time and space and life and death,
And His life flows in flood unending, unending!
His love flows unending, unending!
They know this secret whom He favours so,
It is buried in the bosom of the *Faqirs*.
They are gay, all hours of night and day,
The rippling laughter rolls in their soul!
And all moments pass in the richest joy!

For when they seek the way of love,
And turn *Faqirs*,
No grief can mar their way,
No sorrow can stain their heart,
They are free ! free !
All luxury, all peace, all joy, all exaltation of spirit, all satiety of soul, is theirs !
For He showers on them His love, His beauty, His favour, and His grace fulfils all desires.

Dr. Mohammad Iqbal is the most illustrious representative of the Urdu and Persian poets of the day. He blends Neitsche with Tolstoy ; he is for aggressive selflessness, as was Swami Viveka Nanda ; the parables of moral strength are his daily food. His intellect sweeps the centuries and his language is set in the rhythm of the rise and fall of ages and races. Day and night he sits on his chair, smoking his Turkish pipe, thinking of his Beloved and talking to the people who come round him of reviving dead nations by his song. Truly this is the most real and substantial work. As Carlyle says : A true thought alone is a miracle, the rest is all but a mechanical perfection. In that sense Iqbal is a creator of Taj and not a builder of it. There is a volcano in his bosom and he pants for freedom. He is the power of sweetness, he is helpless and beyond himself whenever and wherever he sees beauty in this dark world.

Iqbal becomes intoxicated with the grandeur of the old Moslem simplicity of faith and character. He is in love with the people that took their birth in the genius of Mohammad. He is bare before man and God and he rubs his forehead in dust at *Mazar* of the Moslem saints like Chisti, Tabrez and Juned. In the early hours of the false dawn, he calls out to his Beloved, as he cries like a child, with tears streaming

down his eyes, and says: "Come out, my soul! I will give up my Namaz.

"I will un-Moslemize ye by my song, O Moslems! if ye think your neighbour is other than yourself."

I am glad he is so great as to have no self-control when nature sings in his ears the melody that creates life; Iqbal would be a sacrifice a hundred times over if he could thereby plant the seed of self-respect in man.

Iqbal is a poet in whose presence thoughts and verses fly out like the birds that come to drink the tears that trickle from the Yogi's eyes. His poems are with his friends who have caught a few as they flew out at random. This marks Iqbal out as the true Moslem poet who knows not what he is.

Iqbal's *Israr-i-khudi*,[1] or the Secrets of Self, does not reveal to us the poet. It is the melting of all philosophy by the fire of his genius, to express his manly feeling at the sight of that weakness in Man which is the cause of all his distress. His disagreement with Neitsche on democracy, as one of masses against the supreme classes, is fundamental and has the support of all Eastern thought. In Allah's eyes, all are equal. What is a Moslem if his heart be not pure with the charity of the Great.

Iqbal has brought a vigorous argument from his own soul to destroy the faith in the "other" and to stand on the "self." His theme is the Beauty of the Prophet's face and he reduces the whole world in the living flame of a true Moslem heart in a poem that sings of Him in All Hearts! Truly with Goethe, we can stand and say: "If this is Islam, are we not all Moslems."

In this Iqbal is a brother of the Punjab poets, of the stormy, songful *Bullah* whose voices thrill the

[1] *The Secrets of Self*, by Iqbal (Macmillan & Co.)

whole land. The Punjab poets fly beyond all limitations, they sing as does the red leaping tongue of fire. Love has caught hold of their soul, it pierces them with its keen blade, and makes them infinite. Iqbal, like his brothers, is warm and familiar to all creation ; he is bare, wild ; his is the untutored instinct of life itself ! And how marvellous ! He is one of the most learned philosophers of his times, a scholar of vast erudition ! He lives in the glorious past of Islam and dreams fondly of a glorious future. But Islam has spent itself in the vain struggle for the formation of a small pan-Moslem nation on this earth. Its strongest point is its weakest, waiting for one single blow of the Hammer of Heaven. Islam in practice has been intensely dualistic, never has it been love for all human beings, as Iqbal says. It has never been in universal sympathy with man, a sympathy as intense as love. It has carried sword, dissension and ruin to non-Moslems everywhere it went.

The charm and attraction of the beautiful Prophet haunts Iqbal and makes him concentrate on rare love-reveries which are denied to a poet of the Tagore type, who constantly desires to reach God everywhere, through everything, in transcendental haziness, which, itself, has no life and is brilliant or not, according to the measure of the self-investment of the poet's own life in it. Iqbal is wedded to the Prophet, while Tagore is like a girl-bride that plays in her innocence on the river banks. One is the ancient star gazer, the fire worshipper re-born in the Punjab, with tearful wonder in his eyes, belonging to the fierce deserts of the World's *Maya*, where he is seeking his Master, like an Arab horse running in search, wild and feverish foam upon his flanks, sweating, panting, dripping in hot haste, in unending pursuit of life, with mute love burning in the inmost secret recesses of his heart !

Tagore is without such impulse, he is more a palace of sound and song and pleases every one as he passes ! One is the wild and savage Arab, the other an accomplished artist, a trained musician, a skilled dancer, a sweet preacher, a master stylist. Iqbal's poetry is born of inspired, throbbing, restless passion, semi-insane, vehement, large, an immense beat of life itself ; Tagore's philosophy is the last spark of the Hindu wisdom of the Upnishadas in its glorious decay !

Iqbal's morning *Namaz* begins with his bathing himself in God's light and bathing the world with his tears :

When the world-illumining Sun
Rushed upon Night, like a brigand,
My weeping bedewed the face of the rose.
My tears washed sleep away from the eyes of the narcissus,
My passion waked the grass and made it grow. . .
My being was an unfinished statue,
Uncomely, worthless, good for nothing,
Love chiselled me : I became a man
And gained knowledge of the nature of the Universe,
I have seen the movement of the sinews of the sky,
And the blood coursing in the veins of the moon.

His song bursts and gives out the secret of prophecy thus :

The fountain of life is love's flashing sword.
The hardest rocks are shivered by love's glance,
Love of God at last becomes wholly God !
Learn thou to love and seek to be loved ;

Seek an eye like Noah's, a heart like Job's!
Transmute thy handful of earth into gold,
Kiss the threshold of a perfect Man.

Now comes a hymn of praise to the Master:

By love of Him the heart is made strong. . . .
Sinai is but an eddy of the dust of His House. . . .
He slept on a mat of rushes,
But the crown of Chosroes was under His people's feet. . . .
In the hour of battle, iron was melted by His sword,
In the hour of prayer, tears fell like rain from His eyes. . . .
In His sight high and low are one,
He sat with His slave at one table. . . .
We were the secret concealed in His heart,
He spoke out fearlessly and we were revealed.
The song of love for Him fills my silent reed,
A hundred notes that are in my bosom.
How shall I tell what devotion He inspires?
A block of dry wood wept at parting from Him,
The Moslem's being is where He manifests His glory. . . .
My dawn rises from the sun of His breast. . . .
The soil of Medina is sweeter than both the worlds,
Oh! happy the town where dwells the Beloved.

Splendid visions rise from the print of His foot. . .
His sudden being is life's mystery,
The unheard music of Life's harp,
Nature travails in blood of generations,
To compose the harmony of His personality,
When our handful of earth has reached the zenith

That champion will come forth from this dust,
There sleeps amongst the ashes of to-day,
The flame of world-consuming morrow. . . .
Oh! do thou pass over our gardens as the Spring.
Receive from our cast brows
The homage of little children and of young men and old!
When Thou are here, we will lift up our heads,
Content to suffer the burning fire of this world. . .
Thou art of great price and we have naught,
Hide not Thy fair face from the empty handed. . .
We are travellers: give us devotion as our goal. .
O Thou! whose face lends light to the morn and the stars,
Withdraw Thy fire from my soul,
Take back what Thou has put in my breast,
Remove the stabbing radiance from my mirror,
Or give me one old comrade,
To be the mirror of my all-burning love. . . .
I beg of Thy grace a sympathising friend,
An adept in the mysteries of my nature,
A friend endowed with madness and wisdom,
One that knows not the phantom of vain things,
That I may confide my lament to his soul,
And see again my face in his heart,
His image I will mould of mine own clay,
I will be to him both idol and worshipper. . . .

There is a savage wildness in Iqbal which makes him so lovable and free. True poetry and true art spring from the wild freedom of the infinite. No creative genius can ever endure the common moulds of life, it creates anew both its own culture and its appreciation:

I am born in the world as a new Sun,
I have not learned the way and fashions of the
sky,
Not yet have the stars fled before my splendour. . .
The eye of Existence is not familiar with me,
I rise trembling, afraid to show myself.

IV

DISCIPLE POETRY

The supreme quality of the divine poetry of the Eastern scriptures in general lies in their power of giving life to the lifeless. I know no other literature that is so single in its purpose. It gives no message but that of life ; all is well with those who live. Some think it is too simple and too full of repetition ; but is a treasury less beautiful because it contains countless diamonds, each in its own place as true and beautiful as the other ?

As to the general accusation of repetition made against all Eastern scriptures by certain scholars of the West, let me vindicate here the word of the Beloved and the repetition of its cooling sound that falls like a shower of rain on our parched hearts. It is true, none know its worth but those who have "Wounds of love" within ; Knowledge cannot tolerate repetition, nothing else can, save only life, only love !

Take *Guru Grantha*, the great Sikh Scripture. I have a personal relation with it. As a Sikh, it is my belief, and my faith that of all the great gifts of Divine poetry, of the Realised Being to mankind, the most fascinating is that we Sikhs in the Punjab call *Guru Grantha*. It is the Scripture of all nations, for it is the lyric of Divine Love, and all people of this earth subsist on such glowing lyrical prayer ! *Guru Grantha* is but one song, one idea, one life. Immensity

is the substance of the sublime. Is not the sea much simpler than land ? Touch it at any point, it is but water. Look at it from any place, it is the sea whose billows capped with white foam dance eternally. It is like the smile of the Infinite. *Guru Grantha* is not full of repetition ; it has a thousand blank pages with the one song of His heart, copied out on every page.

Once Majnun was seen tracing something in the sands of the desert and a passer-by enquired of the "insane" Lover, what he was doing ? Majnun replied : "I am practising to write the name of Leila —the Beloved." Is not God writing His own Name in His glorious creation ? The million faces of man and woman repeat the same Name, yet how beautiful the repetition !

But there is another and very striking phase of *Guru Grantha* which appeals to me Here it is not the Guru but his disciple that sings. When Vishnu appeared to the child Dhruva, drawn by the gem of his little heart, Dhruva was speechless, for he was a child. He knew not how to welcome his God Vishnu. The first thing that he asked was the gift of the song of praise in the Name of Himself. The inspired Dhruva then sings the song of Praise. In the same way, when the Guru came to us in the Punjab, we disciples were dumb ; we knew not what to say to our God. The Guru gave us this Book : "Praise me thus !" These are the songs put into our soul to pour it at the Feet of God when we actually meet Him. The background of *Guru Grantha* is the poet in person. The Guru portion is absolutely silent, it is Eternity. *Guru Grantha* is the greatest symbol and name of Eternal silence. Wrapped in blue garments, there, under the canopy of trees, Guru Nanak sits silent ! He is a book. Whenever we go to him, we meet with no

word, but the rustle of the leaves shaken by the passing winds. But as we thirst for his words, the music of the invisible emanates, as out of nothing. We know not what happens. We find all our lost things in the joy of that sudden music-burst of the Morn and Eve ; the poorest come out as the richest of us all. And every one is so filled, that he thinks himself Infinite. All desires die ! And the soul, resting in eternal repose, sees Beauty everywhere ; its lips open to render thanks at every step and for every thing to the Beloved Silence. *Guru Grantha* is thus the deathless song of the pilgrims on their way to the Golden Temple, the song that the Father has written for the Son. The song is unending, because the path that goes to the Temple of Love is also unending. Every page of Creation is new life and inspiration ; so is *Guru Grantha*. The design on every page is the same ; every morn the same sunrise, every evening the same sunset and yet an eternity of meaning before and behind, by little changes in colour and glow, in light and shade.

All that is really beautiful opens the wings of our soul and helps it on its flight for freedom. *Guru Grantha* has the supreme quality of lighting our soul with love and freeing us from all bondage of sense in the light of self-realization. At every step eternity looks at us through each single star of a song. The Guru has gone ! He has left for us, in that room that he occupied in our homes, a hundred oil lamps burning bright. Each lamp sheds a white light, but each light, as it burns, flashes His Glance upon our soul. One star in the sky, one lamp in the room, can never be so beautiful as these countless lights that he has lit for us in the firmament of our soul. Repetition of the name of the Creator is beautiful when a single torch

in His hand goes on lighting countless torches! The centres of God-light increase in the Universe for ever!

When we, from our wayward wanderings on the road of life, turn at night-fall to our homes, what regales us? The self-same face of our Beloved! Seeing again the face of the Beloved re-creates us, while variety and the complexity of jungle and city kill us. How wonderful it is that every fresh meeting reveals a new joy and a new truth that we never realized before. This ever-newness of the same face through the inspiration of Divine Love is Infinite.

Each hymn of *Guru Grantha*, wearing a face similar to a million like itself, bears the individuality of one particular moment of the Great Songster and is ever new, even as every man made of similar flesh and bone is new. A rare and an intense genius of love alone can appreciate the calm One-ness of repetition of the Praise of the Beloved, it tolerates no variety, it loves but one word, one song!

Once in a garden I was overcome with wonder. A *Koel* was singing, hid amid the leaves of a mango tree. Nature stood still motionless, in a silence broken only by the voice of the *Koel*. I heard it once, the sound went through my soul. I heard it again, it pierced me deeper; I listened to it for hours, yet each time the appeal of the self-same note was deeper, more intense, more noble. I wondered that the repetition by the *Koel* of the same sound could be so different every time in its effect on my soul!

As we find the Disciple-poetry, centring round the Koran, the Bible, the Upnishadas, so do we find in the Punjab, as time rolls on, the songs of Disciples growing in volume around the Beloved's throne—

Guru Grantha is the perennial fountain of the modern poetry of the Land of the Five Waters. There has been a gap of thousands of years between the Upnishadic hymns sung on the banks of the Five Rivers by the Aryans of old, and the first Sikh hymns composed and set to music by Guru Nanak himself some 400 years ago.

The chief characteristic of the later Disciple-poetry is an intense yearning for glimpses of His Face. Its music kindles the light of love in empty shrines; its cadence is that of the temple bells that awaken the worshippers at dawn. Its *Samadhi* is personal. Indeed, after Guru Nanak, all the mystics and devotees of the Punjab have sung Punjabi songs in the Master's tunes.

The verse of Bhai Gur Das sung in deep spiritual rapture, is like reading "sermons in stones and books in the running brooks." The theme of the poet is the inner Illumination that is kindled at the touch of the Master; grossness vanishes and the subtle light shines on the path of life in one unbroken spell of love. Awake, yet asleep, the disciple is pure as God, by the grace of the Guru. To Bhai Gur Das, the disciple is unthinkable without the Guru, as two together make the Godly life on Earth. Wherever his eyes fall, he sees the same life. All things are words for him to express his love—the love of the disciple and the Guru. The Master is before him in the form divine of Man and his mind is so concentrated in his own love-reverie, that he sees none but the Master. Bhai Gur Das is one of the brotherhood who have a temple of their own. They are neither Christians, nor Moslems, nor Hindus—they are Sikhs—Disciples—of the Master, and profess no religion but that of Love, of Silence of the Infinite, of Harmony with the Heart

of God. They are of the self-absorbed revellers in the feast, drinking nectar from the Master's cup. In one of his hymns Bhai Gur Das says : " Pour into my heart a drop of thy life-giving wine of light, break our principles of piety, and erase our names from the list of the ' moralists ' that drink not the Nectar of Life."

Bhai Nand Lal, the disciple of Guru Govind Singh, is one of our highest types of poet. He was born in Afghanistan, his mother tongue was Persian. He was a great scholar of Arabic and the lore of the Koran, and was private secretary to one of the Moghul princes in the days of the Emperor Aurangzeb. Renouncing everything, he made his way to Anandpore and became the most beloved disciple of the Tenth Guru.

In his simple fondness for Guru Govind Singh he is like a child. Wars may rage, tempests come, empires wax and wane, but Bhai Nand Lal is serious only when he sings of Him. He pours noble blood into his songs. Repeat them, they give you joy, repeat them again, they give you still greater joy. We are so much attached to him, that his very name seals our lips with honey.

From His Beautiful bow
He has shot the arrow with His own hands.
The arrow is gone from the bow,
There is no cure, no more for me.
The arrow is through my heart !

Wherever thou goest, Go ! God be with Thee !
Thou art taking my heart and my religion, too, with Thee.
Go, God be with thee.
The eyes that are half-closed with joy caught from the beams of Thy face, look not at anything else !

If in their way, a thousand thrones wait for them,
The joy-sealed eyes have no time to cast even a passing glance, on the jewelled Crowns.

The Heart of the world is lost in the soft beauty of the mole on Thy cheek ?
The blasphemy of loving Thy locks, methinks, is worth all the sacred religions.

There is none else besides Him,
He is concealed below these veils of palaces and shrines,
How can fire Divine be two ?
Strike any pair of stones you may,
The glint of fire is but one and the same.

My eyes !
No ! They are the shrine of the Beloved !
My body !
No ! It is the throne of the King !

To-night he hath not come,
The assembled guests waited for Him the whole night,
There was nothing, but the sparks that fell from the eyes of the oil-lamp !
A rain of live glances ! and there was nothing !

O roaring winds !
Blow gently as ye pass, touching His Temple Door ;
And lift not my dust away from His Temple Door,
Even after my death,
Lest my foes should say,
" Look ! How He wanders from door to door ! "

Bhai Vir Singh is an epoch in himself. With him begins the most modern Punjabi language ; he gives it a new style, a new rhythm and a new flow. He has not been able yet to pour his best, but we thank God for what he has already given us. He sits under the tree of life in maiden freshness like his Guru. His song is vital and he imparts most of his joy to his poems. He is the representative poet of those old Sikh poets who revolved round the Beloved's throne in wonder and worship. He is a true Eastern genius, still loyal to Asiatic ideals of art, philosophy and religion. He is a democratic aristocrat, as every joyful man must needs be.

As a poet Bhai Vir Singh is a rider whose Fairy Horse careers up and down the past and the future. He encounters the people that have gone by, talks to those that are coming and thus becomes intimate with future centuries. He rides, in joy and pride of his Great Guru, Nanak Govind Singh, to and fro in the golden regions of the Spirit of God. It is but rarely that the hoofs of his Pegasus strike a spark of life on our stony hearts. Having seen him, I realise how the touch of the foot of the Great Rama freed the imprisoned Ahilya. To us the efficacy of this touch means everything. The rejoicing and chanting of happy angel voices in a thousand temples ring in him. One marvels what can stay him from bursting into a dance like that of Shiva or Chaitanya. What holds him ? He keeps all his joy within himself, for so hath ordered Guru Nanak. He retains all this excellence until his very flesh savours of the perfume of roses. On the full moon of November, when Guru Nanak was born, this great Sikh becomes the scene of the *Avtar,* which invites the whole world to drink the *Soma* of life. His art is of the eye witness ; he writes what he sees ; draws his poems from the melody

of his soul. When the scene is before him, he draws its rough outline, but before he fills it in the original scene has dissolved. His art is of the highest, not for the cleverness of the word-painting, nor for its power of story-telling that conjures up past events in panorama, nor for the delicate grace of its purity and beauty ; nor, even, for its great humanity. It is the deep realization behind it, so masterly in its imperial authority that the very stones, when called by his voice, move and offer a prayer of thankfulness to their Creator. He cleanses the outcast, dresses them in moonlight so that the most abject feel like gods. There is the mysterious halo of New Spring in his poems. He adds a new universe to our soul. His voice is as the voice of the Beloved. The lofty, gorgeous, infinite, eternal melody of *Guru Grantha* rings in his blood and his being is resonant with the song of the Beloved.

His writings are spiritual in effect. They do not stimulate intellect so much as the soul. He is modest, like a virgin, hiding his passion in the deepest recesses of his heart. His life is vowed in love to God. He is invisible to the vulgar eye ; now and then we have a glimpse of the poet, when he pours out his passion suddenly, in the memory of his beloved Guru, in the bosom of a river, or the heart of a rock, and makes them sing aloud his secret pain. This silent poet makes the rivers cry and sets the hills on fire by the touch of his emotion. He remains behind the scenes, invisible, with his flute ringing in the loneliness of a dark midnight. His touch alone can make a poet. I have seen unlettered men and women glowing with poetry when sitting near him. I wander round his rooms, sit here and stand there, do nothing, think nothing, just wonder and admire, taking tea with him, or enjoying a morning meal in his company, gaze at

him as he bathes, as he eats and talks, as he listens to the conversation of those around him; and when I come away I invariably find myself full of a divine glow; my consciousness has grown iridescent, full of God, His mercy, and His love. After seeing him I find myself a beautiful thing worthy my own homage and love and admiration. I feel like worshipping myself. I find myself intensely creative, and when he thinks of me ardently I am inspired with a new passion for life. He is seen only indirectly, through the inspired consciousness that is induced by his goodness in others that go near him. He is the true poet of the East, who opens our eyes to see the Beloved. "See! there is a rain of glory everywhere. Joy rains down—Beauty is flooding everywhere," says he, in confidence. And we see, we are drenched, deluged with God. Lo, a silent, profound man of God, with a presence that inspires joy of life, love of God, and goodness of man.

Song of the Godavari[1]

(The river Godavari feels a glorious joy as Guru Govind Singh, from the Punjab, wets his feet in her waters, and the river bursts out into the following ecstatic song):

The life-thrill of the lotus-touch of His feet has made me sweetly insane with joy!
The sacred touch has infused the trembling oceans of song, that have ravished and shaken all my waters with the life yet unknown to me!
In every wave of mine throbs the oceans of the celestial song,
And I tremble as a little reed shaken by the wind.

[1] The Godavari, like the Ganges, is a sacred river where hundreds and thousands of Hindu saints, adepts and *Yogis* go on pilgrimage,

It has kindled, suddenly, every ripple of mine
with the glow of life,
And in my myriad waves, I quiver for ever,
restless in love, like the lightning of the sky!
It has lifted me off my feet, and I float in sweetest
confusion of love,
I rise out of myself, trembling every drop in this
universe of song,
And I melt into a million ripples at His Feet!

O Sisters! say what a strange and sweet gift is this
That has made me free!
Many an adept came, I ran to touch his feet,
I laved the feet of hundreds of the *Yogi*-Saints,
I bathed with devotion the feet of many more
priests and pious men,
But my soul returned to me, finding no fountain
of life where I had dreamt, still athirst with
love!
But sisters! Who has been so kind to-day, like
the shower of the Heavenly Grace?
Who makes me the least of His devotees, the
queen of Heaven?
Who has me pierced to-day with the barb of his
Love-arrow?
Who overwhelms me thus with the Infinite?
And who transfixes me in wonderous love,
quivering forever with song, shivering for-
ever with the glow of His Love?
Ah! Sisters! who has been so kind to-day!

I Cannot Control My Heart

I cannot control my heart!
Out of my control it goes, if only to touch His
Palace Door!

My blind senses feel the marble of His High Towers !
The flesh of my soul is lost in ecstacy at the touch of His marble Walls !
Ah ! I cannot stay there nor return !
I am drowned in oceans of joy !
I am dumb with song ! I say nothing, I know nothing.

The Kikar Trees (*Acacia Arabica*)

I grow upward, my march is heaven-ward,
My face is turned to the God of the Skies,
Nor village, nor city, nor palace, nor hut need I in this world of yours,
I am he who can pass his days without a roof, in rain, sunshine, hail and wind,
I love to look at the God of the Skies !
I need but a small piece of ground for my roots just to stand, to blossom, to bear fruit and die !
I need no raiment nor food from Thee, O world !
The rain water is enough for me, I drink and grow !
I live on air, I desire naught !
I am alone in myself, the ascetic of centuries past and the ascetic of the centuries yet to come.
And even for me, O world ! Thou hast but an axe !

The Radiant Brow[1]

A beggar at Thy Door,
Begging the subtle affection
Of Thy Radiance, O, Beauteous, Bounteous Soul !

[1] From the poet's Punjabi poems, *Matak Hularé*, Wazir-i-Hind Press, Amritsar.

I came fearing, fearing, trembling, trembling,
I came telling my steps as sacred beads up to Thy Door;
But when I saw Thy radiance,
I was comforted;
Kindness overflowed its banks;
In Thee doth live the ever-anxious ecstacy to bless the soul of man!

The Memory of His Touch

(A poem put in the mouth of a plucked flower)

Thou didst deign to pluck us,
And we were fain to let ourselves be torn from the twigs;
Thou didst but catch the scent of our perfume, and we but touch of the sweetness of Thy breast; then Thou didst throw us off!
We were lost both to thee and ourselves, to our past and our future;
Mingled with the dust we lay,
And the passers by trampled us down,
And the tyranny tore us petal by petal;
We lay as little birds with our wings plucked and scattered!
Our soul is but an immortal memory now of the fatal relish of Thy caress;
And we sing still in this ruin the hymns of that thankfulness,
O Love! O Love!

As the Tuned String

As the tuned string in the singer's fingers
In Thy hand, I quiver with sounds of Thy Heart,
O Beauteous Lover!

And I am silent when Thou dost lay me down,
removing Thy subtle, sweet touch;
The magic miracle lives in Thy Hands,
By the merest touch the soul revives,
Pray do not part me from Thy bosom,
From this music of Union.

The Poet's Speech with the Goddess of Poesy

The Goddess of poesy lives in high palaces of yonder lofty spheres,
Living in azure waves of her own soul-music,
Radiant with the splendours of her Celestial Self;
One evening she came to earth, clothed in auroras, throbbing in a hundred colours of life, excited with music, elated with thrills of love.
Like a dew-drop on a string of gold,
She came;
Like the lustre of pearls, strung on the thread of the jeweller,
Tender, soft, delicate, like a thrill of delight,
She came;
Like the ring of the sweetest voice,
Like the murmur melodious of the *citar*-strings,
Like the surprise of the most beauteous shape,
She came, diffusing herself in me like the diamond glint of stars;
And I quivered with her touch, as the harp chords throb at the musician's fervent plucking
In my soul, the liquid music of her rapture rose,
The colours of a thousand skies of beauty made a tumult of song in me;
I lost my foothold, and in the selflessness of joy I was pure.

Like the wings of the bird about to fly,
The wings of my "self" fluttered;
My soul was drunken;
And I was lost in azure heights.
"With Thee in me, all things grow beautiful,
Such is Thy Beauty, O Goddess of poesy," said I;
"But why so vanishing? Why so infinitely restless? so volatile and evanescent?
The mountains stand, wrapt in joy,
The seas, the lakes and the forests last,
And the glory of all that is here?
Why is Thy spark so illusive?"
And the Goddess of poesy clothed in live light of love, replied:
"Who can say to the spark of lightning 'stay?'
The ray from the sun shines and passes like the thrill of music to the Domains of Yonder Infinite speed of life.
Ah! who can fetter the trembling tunes of song with clay?
The shooting stars flash in the skies, and the glory vanishes;
And who would ever catch the illusion of the rainbow?
The beam of the moon, the glint of the diamond star, come down, tremble for a while and are lost.
Who has ever bound the inspiration that flows,
From the *Chatrik's* love-cry for the rain;
From the ravishing coo of the *Koel;*
The beauty of such as these and those is of the vibrant realms of feeling,
And we are made of an infinite passing away.
The spheres roll, the orbs pass on, the rings burn,
And circle in circle, revolve all-thrilling,

And we like beams of light pierce the trembling
veils of space, appear and disappear with an
infinite speed of Thought ;
Ours is but to flash and not to answer why ;
We come and limn the soul with lustre, and thrill
it with that strange, strange Delight of
'*There*,'
The sparks of life just fly and ignite the very
rocks with love and '*die* ;'
For us, there is no halting, it is a continuous going
away ;
Born of trembles, we are of trembles made ;
feelings, feelings are all, in your heart we
come and play ;
And on the forehead of us all God has written
the fate of the ocean-tremble of His great
emotion that creates love in human heart."

I Saw Thee in a Dream, Beloved !

I saw Thee in a dream, Beloved !
I flew into Thy Arms ;
But Thy Figure was of lightning made,
Beyond my poor embrace,
Only my arm bereft trembling with unfulfilled
faith ;
I bowed my head to Thy Feet,
But my forehead touched nothing ;
Thou wert like a vision high above me,
And I could not reach ;
I ran to catch the edge of Thy Garment,
But it was the fluttering flash,
I could not hold it in my upspread hands ;
The Flying One, Thou, the Radiant Figure of
Love !

Flying above, thou didst burn me with Thy luminous Touch.
Thou hast kindled a fire in my heart,
My dead clay has blazed up with life,
And every hair shines now with *soul.*

The Ruins of the Hindu Temple of Martand (Kashmir)

When they beat down mercilessly the Temple of Martand,
The very stones cried to the Idol-breaker!
"Thinkest thou art breaking but lifeless stones?
Ah! many hearts are breaking here!
The human heart is the true Ka'aba.
Who is thy God? O, Idol-breaker!
Thy hammer is falling on us, but it wounds God, who lives in every heart;
Ah! many hearts are breaking!
Who is thy God? O, Idol-breaker!"

Deep Dark Evening at Ichhabal Spring (Kashmir)

The poet says:

The shades of Evening have vanished under the wings of the falling night,
But, O, Ichhabal, thou art still awake and flowing!
Thy waters sing the song of life and are never tired of sweeping forward!
The pilgrim, and the bird, and the farmer, all are nesting in their places for the night;
And sweet repose is stealing on the limbs of life;

Nature is lying asleep on the black carpet woven
of the molten mountains, vales, rocks and
trees ;
O, Ichhabal ! But why art thou still awake and
departing ?

The spring replies :

They whose hearts are pierced by the arrow of
that Sweet Huntsman who drags the soul
with maddening music of His Union, know
no rest ;
The eyes, enamoured of the Beauteous God, know
no sleep ;
The streams of tears flow unceasingly ;
But one thought, but one feeling ever of Him,
aching in their hearts,
They go forever seeking Him ;
Day and night the travellers of Love go beyond
all space,
Union with Him is the city of destination they
are nearing forever in the music of their
endless going.

A Memory

The beauty of the Brahman maiden, a symbol of
the glory of the past culture of Cashmere,
still commands the reverence due to
faith,
How rich, iridescent, calm, bright and fair and
faultless,
A statue of virtue in full flower that bends its
half-closed lotus-eyes on its self in splendid,
modest self-restraint ;

The Brahman-woman roams, free as the angel of the Valley, more like a floating image in the air, a dream, a vision, a memory of the by-gone glory of Cashmere than like a woman,
And in the Brahman woman lives still the beautiful soul of old Cashmere !

THE WULLER LAKE (KASHMIR)

Wuller ! Thy expanse is as the boundless joy of soul ;
Thy largeness hath the twinkle of gems ;
Thy heart is brimful of ever new springs ;
Beauty floats on thy waters ;
And Freedom flies on golden wings of aimless rapture wild ;
In thy soul of virgin solitude, there is the perpetual bustle of the Wedding of the Infinite !

Apostles around the Beloved's Throne speak little. Their eyes are half closed in the *Darshanam* (living image). The Beloved is before their eyes, and him alone they see. The meaning of their poetry is only fresh to themselves or to their brethren who know the secrets of their deep fascination, for they see the face of the Beloved again and again, believe in nothing else, and care still less in their absorption for any wayside sights and delights.

Valmik and Tulsidas, the noble lovers of Shri Ram Chandra, have so fixed their gaze on their Beloved that whosoever reads them must do likewise. The *Ramayan* of Tulsidas raises before our eyes the vision of God, while the *Mahabharat* does not ; the secret of the success of the former lies in the concentration of the poet in devotion to the Beloved. Once, they say,

Krishna appeared before Tulsidas in vision. Tulsidas, wonder-struck by the vision of God, said, " Pray ! come to me in the shape of Shri Rama Chandra, Pray ! put on your bow and arrow. In that shape of Thine lies the greatest bliss of Thy devotee."

It is here that the modern critic finds the apostles deficient in breadth of vision, for though they love one, hate none and serve all, yet they appear to be one-sided. This is life, while mere liberal impersonal thought is but chaff.

The apostles, like the little insignificant seeds that nestle in the whole tree, are enclosed in their two little leaves of heart. They are shut in themselves, it is their devotion to the Beloved that is the mother of all their thought and moral ideas. Truth is as a tiny seed. Why call their deep sincerity intoleration ? How can one have two Beloveds ? It is not the apostle's concentration in devotion to their Lord, but the many other things within us that lead to misery of dualism. The infant in its mother's lap is never the cause of war, it is only those of us who can say " my mother " that are able to fight. Those who are asleep in the Infinite are in the deepest harmony with life. To wake, to think, to feel, to do, is sinning against the sacredness of ecstacy. Who says, " 'Tis is I ? " or " 'Tis mine " ? The men of God speak not ; their writings are spray of love-water thrown at each other in the sport of soul-rapture between themselves and the Beloved, while bathing in running rivers of Life.

. . . . . .

Bullah Shah awakens the eternal silence by his tremendous voice. As he begins, the drums beat, the bugles blow, the cymbals clash ; the muezzin joins him and the dancing girl forgets herself. All grow one as Bullah Shah pours out flood upon flood. He is a poet, a disciple, and a man of renunciation in one.

Shah Hussain is the King. He has but one supreme vocation—to look at his Beloved and tell one bead of his rosary made of tear drops, to look again and tell another bead of tears and ecstacy, praising his own Master. When he is hungry, some one brings him bread, and God gives him water when he is thirsty; he acknowledges nothing else and no one else. He seems an aimless rambler; he has found happiness in himself and does not care to speak. There are but few pieces of Shah Hussain, but they are keen-edged arrows that pierce the soul:

It is hard to be a disciple,
To seal up thy speech,
To bend low thy head,
To die before death,
To melt thy youth in His crucible,
To be his Gold,
Perchance He may appear!

Poems from Bullah Shah

I

Oh! I would be an Enchantress,
And by a hundred mystic rites,
By a hundred spells and superstitions,
By a hundred smoking-censers,
I would but win Him to my self!

I would have the very sun for my fire,
And I would blow it with my breath, charged with power;
O! I would be an enchantress;
I will pour the black dye of clouds in my eyes,
And glow of youth I will wear as my only jewel,
I would but win Him to myself!

The seven oceans sleep in me and I would stir
them into a storm,
But I would win Him to myself!
I would burst like fierce lightning,
I would blow like a soft cloud searching for Him
everywhere!

The love of my heart is flaming up,
And the stars are falling upon it as grains of
incense and the smoke of sacrifice is rising!
Oh! by a hundred incantations, would I win
Him!

* * * * * *

I am not a wedded woman,
Nor am I unwedded,
But the *Nam-child* plays in my bosom,
And I am a mother!
O! Bullah! let go the boat on tideless Eternity
and sail beyond all shores, blowing the horn
of the Eternal.

O, I would be an Enchantress!
And by a hundred mystic rites,
By a hundred spells and superstitions,
By a hundred smoking censers,
I would but win Him to myself,
I would have the very sun for my fire,
And I would blow it with my breath, charged
with power.

II

Know me or know me not, O Love!
As it may be thy pleasure,
Deign but to come once and adorn my heart,
Beloved!

I am gone, I am dropped, I am cast aside as a
hundred sacrifices for Thee!
A hundred times I lie dead at Thy Feet, O
Beloved!
I have searched Heaven and Earth,
No other is to me as Thou art!

They think Thou art but a man, a cowherd!
And they call Thee Ranjah! Beloved!
But they know not, thou art my God, my Heaven,
my soul,
I am dead at thy feet a hundred times in joy of
Thee!
Know me or know me not, O Love!
As it may be Thy pleasure,
Come but once and adorn my heart, Beloved!

I came away dragged by thy love, Beloved!
leaving the roof of my parents far behind!
Thou art my only Refuge, Beloved!
I am a woman crying for Thee!
O King *Inayat!* [1] Deign to favour me!
Know me or know me not, O Love!
As it may be thy pleasure!
Deign but to come once to me and adorn my
heart once, Beloved!

III

Turn Thy Face, O Love!
This way, this way!
Look this way, O Sun of suns,
This way, this way!
Thy flower is drooping!

[1] Inayat Shah of Kasur is the spiritual preceptor of Bullah Shah.

Thou hast caught me like a fish in thy hook, and thou art still pulling me with thy invisible strings through all these waters,,
And yet I see Thee not!
Turn Thy Face, O Love!
This way, this way!
Look this way, O Sun of suns,
This way, this way!
Thy flower is drooping!

The Muezzins have cried Thy name in all the seven Heavens;
And a new Mecca has risen again on Earth;
And yet Thou showest not Thyself to me!
Turn Thy Face, O Love!
This way, this way!
Look this way, O Suns of suns!
This way, this way!
Thy flower is drooping!

IV

O Sisters! The Beloved diverts himself, he has concealed himself. He is here, there, everywhere, behind the tree, below the shade, hidden in the night, and the day!
And He has come to play!
Pray! awake and sing together the song of His Nam!
Together, together, O Sister! sing His Nam!

What can conceal His strange Beauty?
O Sisters! what can hide Him?
You all know, you all know,
O Sisters! Pray awake and sing together, the song of His Nam!
Together, together, O Sisters! sing His Nam!

Serve that Beautiful One by thinking of Him,
Love Him and no one else,
Till "We" in us is dead, O sisters!
This is the secret buried in our bosoms!
You all know, you all know!
O sisters! Pray awake and sing together His Nam,
Together, together, O sisters! sing His Nam!

Once we have started on our pilgrimage this way,
When we have cast our lives in love,
Off with covers and veils sisters! what fear and shame and for what?
In broad daylight, converse with Him,
Our eyes glow more with light than the orbs of Heavens,
O sisters! rise and sing His Nam,
Together, together, O sisters! sing His Nam!

V

O! I would write of love to my Krishna!
For He cometh not to me!
O Brother astrologer! Read my fortune, but say nothing to me if there is not good luck for me!
I would have fled from this misery of separation from Him, if I could!!
For he has cast his chains round my neck and I am caught all unaware,
O! I would write of love to my Krishna!
For He cometh not to me!

I have in my hand a basket of fruits,
And I am searching for a buyer of my fruits,
And I go from door to door in search of Him,
O! I would write of love to my Krishna!
For He cometh not to me!

Come my comrades ! Take me to the city of the
Beloved !
And leave me there, about His shrine !
And I would wait there with my soul in prayer,
For life away from Him has become a cry,
O ! I would write of love to my Krishna !
For He cometh not to me !

VI

O Beloved ! O Rider of Heaven !
Turn the reins of Thy steed once this way !
O far off One, be near, be near !
I die a hundred times thinking of the sacred paths
trodden by thy steed !

Every day the *Koel* flies across the garden and
sings,
And every day her notes arouse in me a frenzy,
Unbearable is the distance now, painful is all
space.
O Beloved ! Rider of the Heaven ;
Turn the reins of thy steed once this way,
O far off One, be near ! be near ! !
I die a hundred times thinking of the sacred
paths trodden by Thy steed !

V

SHINGHAR : THE BLOSSOM OF YOUTH

(Illustrated by Punjabi Songs)

Following divine and devotional poetry, we have *Shinghar* or the poetry of passion. As long as youth, spring and dreams are with us, so long will this kind of poetry be fascinating. All lyrical poetry and most of the artistic productions of the world are *Shinghar*, often blending with *Vairagam* or " sadness of life's mystery." Compared with the poetry of passion, the poetry of sadness has little resemblance to the highest lyrics of the Seers of Simrin. The effect of the poetry of *Shinghar* lasts but as long as the rosiness of youth. It is the passion of sweet illusion, that revels in wasting itself. As soon as it learns to restrain itself, it glows with the splendour of God-passion.

It is only this *Shinghar* poetry of the East which, in its spontaneous innocence, is free from religious expression and meaning. But even it is positive and has the personality of Divine Man as its theme. The young do not care for philosophy, for God's youth has come to them in abundance ; they are little people who have suddenly got a purse full of gold, which does not permit them to seek more till they have spent it. The joy of spring and youth is akin to the highest æsthetic delight of Self-realization, save only the latter is tranquil and constant, and the former restless and fitful.

The poetry of passion consists of the highest adoration of the Idols. All feeling starts from that. While offering worship to the marble idol of Shiva, the true Hindu idol-worshipper sees that the real God Shiva has put out his bowl before him, to accept the offering of his devotee. The Persian is a great symbolist; he replaces the marble idol of the Hindu by a statue, still made of marble, whose lips move and whose sudden lifting of arms and feet astonish the devotee, like the awakening of Galatea. All art consists in making statues and pictures that can move with our own life and Self-realization. All objective symbolism is but a poetic way of expressing the subjective realization of beauty. A beautiful story is related of a Japanese painting. A horse came running from the hills, galloped into the green rice fields and began to graze. The peasants ran after the horse but they could not catch him. Finally, they saw the horse enter a hut. They went in, the horse had disappeared; yet, as they searched for him, there he was, panting, the foam still white on his flanks! A painting by a master was hanging on the wall. He breathed his breath into the nostrils of the clay statue. So was man created! Clay idols are sometimes only ideals and nothing else. "By these thy created objects—idols—I know thee," said Guru Nanak. The greatest achievement of art, philosophy, religion or love is to fall in love with ourselves. Thus says Shams Tabrez:

How insane was Majnun,
He fell in love with Leila,
Leila left him and he became sad and lonely,
How strange is Shams Tabrez, he fell in love with himself,
As he saw himself, he found nothing but God in himself.

Poetry of passion is only an object lesson, to teach us how to love the Teacher, the Master, the Buddha. In the Punjab, those who loved woman were our greatest saints; the lovers of men have been our woman saints. The goal of life is fixed for us. As I have said elsewhere, they misinterpret poets like Omar Khayyam who think them to be epicureans. They are our symbolists. Krishna-Lila is another piece of great symbolism open to no other interpretation in the age-long context of our genius, character, inspiration and love. Much of our passion poetry revolves around the Divine Person of Man. Our lyrics and love-hymns are always sung symbolically by a woman. Poetry is a nymph. It is Gopika who sings of Krishna. It is the peasant-princess Hir who paints the beauty of the eye-brows of Ranjah to us. It is the Goddess Parbati who seeks the love of Shiva. We think it so unseemly to put poetry in the mouth of a man. Its right place is the soul and the heart of a woman. In the vedic hymns, God is described as *Purusha*, the Man, and all humanity recipient of His Grace, Inspiration and love, is shown as a Woman waiting for Him. In the hymns of *Guru Grantha*, the great artists have made all their love-songs spoken by women. This is the most artistic phase of our poetic consciousness. This art has been sustained in the Punjab, especially because there life has always been threatened by foreign invasions. It has always been surrounded by danger and insecurity, consequently it was the Lover of Woman—the man—who became as rare and precious as he was brave and fearless. Sisters and mothers saw him alive one moment, his eyes singing love; the next, the fair young man had died on his sword. Again, most of the tragic lamentations rose from the heart of the mother. Why should man sing, he looks so ludicrous ?

In some literatures, as in that of Persia, songs are put in the mouth of the man, but to us it shows that in those lands love has not come of age—woman is still held in subjugation, and is not deemed to have a soul. In this respect the Punjabi literature, which is the youngest and the newest, is true to the ancient ideals of art and love. The voice of all lyrics must be feminine.

The Punjabi poetry is so intense, because it is mostly the product of war. For preserving the old intensity in the tragic song of love, there is no substitute for the environment of danger and death. The commercial selfishness of the modern world makes life stagnant. I grow sick at the small and dualistic mind of the new, civilized Punjabi. In the very nature of things the ideals of civic duty do not call forth that chivalrous spirit which the piercing appeals for defence from mothers and sisters, called forth in ancient times of danger and freedom. The poetry of modern life cannot be sufficiently " sunburnt " ; it is more or less pale and consumptive.

Other literatures in which man is painted to love woman, say nothing about the music that lives in the silent depths of a woman's love. Punjabi poetry is reproducing it in such a way as to let us overhear the song of those unknown depths. We all know the waters in which man stands as far as his love for woman goes, but few can plumb the unfathomable heart of a woman. She is silent, but behind her silence a hundred songs are waiting to be sung, a hundred feelings to be expressed. The masters of Oriental poetry alone were right, who sang their love from the soul of a woman.

Punjabi love-songs are addressed either to the Beloved or to the soul of the love-wounded herself, or sometimes to the latter's most intimate associates,

but never to a second or third person. The revelations of the woman's soul are made behind the veil and are not opened to the gaze of vulgar eyes. Modest, reserved, enduring, patient, silent and selfless is she, but it is in her blood to sing of love and to be free.

How simple is the following, from the heart of a girl who is singing aloud her pain, but to no ears but her own :—

White as pearls are his teeth and his eyebrows so black,
Wonderous are the curves and lines of the mysterious man,
His crimson turban has disappeared in the blue, my love is gone !
Turn not thy back on me, O wearer of the crimson turban !
I do a hundred things for him and ply myself in a hundred ways,
But the wearer of the crimson turban doth not enter my chambers.
Nor doth he come at night on my roof,
Oh ! the day when I met him.
I am washing clothes and am sitting in the window, waiting for him and weeping,
The water flows by, my tears fall in the flowing water,
But he never comes to me, my sun knows not that without him, all is dark for me.
O, wearer of the crimson turban !

Here is another such revelation. Songs such as these were composed by the women of the Punjab when they gathered at a festival or wedding day. It is a pity that this beautiful literature is fast disappearing for want of proper encouragement.

The following is perhaps the finest dialogue-song of the old Punjab, depicting the happy Punjabi home that has now passed away, giving place to a ridiculous imitation of Western life.

Father-in-law (*addressing his daughter-in-law*) :
Oh ! why does the queen bride of my home wear garments of sadness ?
Why do the thoughts of death cross her mind ?

Daughter-in-law : I wear the garment of sadness, death seems sweeter than life,
For thy son, O Rajajee ! is going on travels abroad.

Father-in-law : Oh ! why does the queen bride of my home wear garment of sadness ?
Call back the soldier-king of thy heart, let him not go on travels abroad.

Daughter-in-law (*to herself*) : In haste, Oh ! hastily I go to the tailor,
To whom he has given his new raiments to sew,
O son of the tailor ! Take your time, five, seven days,
That my husband may stay at home this month !

In haste, Oh! hastily I go
to the dyers to whom he
has given his turban to
dye,
O son of the dyer! take your
time, take five, seven
days,
That my husband may stay
at home this month!

In haste, Oh! hastily I go
to the washerman to
whom he has given his
clothes to wash,
O son of the washerman!
Take your time, five,
seven days,
That my husband may stay at
home this month!

Father-in-law: O, my bride-queen, wise and
bright,
Call thy husband back,
And undo his resolve!

Daughter-in-law (*aloud*): I will, O Rajajee!
(*To herself*) I will keep him at home.
I will light the lamps and
make our halls bright,
And say many things while
seated in the light of the
midnight lamp,
Sweetly, sweetly pursuading
him, I will make him
change his resolve.

* * * * * *

Bride (*to her husband, at night*) : My love do not
go in the month of *Chet*,[1]
For spring is in full bloom and
great is love and joy and
God.
Nor in the month of *Baisakh*,
for Jasmine is just open-
ing its buds and throw-
ing its perfume.
Nor in the month of *Jeth*, for
it is the month of dyes,
To get our robes in rainbow
colours, to wear, and to
laugh and to love.
Nor in the month of *Har*, for
the days are hot and
nights are cool, my
love.
Nor in the month of *Sawan*,
it raineth, raineth, pour-
eth for ever,
The purple clouds are gather-
ing, the peacocks have
begun to dance,
The swings are hanging on
the mango trees,
This is our own month,
amorous and passionate,
Do not go my love !
Rock me in the swing, my
love, again my love,
again !

[1] *Chet*, March-April ; *Baisakh*, April-May ; *Jeth*, May-June *Har*, June-July ; *Sawan*, July-August ; *Bhadon*, August-September ; *Asuj*, September-October ; *Kartik*, October-November ; *Maghar*, November-December ; *Poh*, December-January ; *Mahan*, January-February ; *Phagun*, February-March.

Nor in the month of *Bhadon*,
as my heart trembleth
and I feel not well.
The spirits of the ancestors
come, propitiate them,
the past rushes to my
brain! my love! not in
the month of *Asuj*.
The lamps are lighted, cities
are gay, it is the festival
of garlands of lamps
which our nights wear.
Let us too decorate our home
with the burning lamps.
You pour the oil, Love!
I light the wick and we too
celebrate! not in the
month of *Kartik*.
Nor in the month of *Maghar!*
New calico prints for the win-
ter from the dyer come.
Choose, my love, the best you
like, I make new bed
coverings for you.
The nights are dark and long,
I shiver with cold,
Hold my hands in thine and
make them warm, my
love!
Do not go out this month of
Poh.
Nor in the month of *Mahan!*
The fair of blazes comes, the
girls gather and sing in
chorus, the fires are lit,
and they go round

Singing the songs of the month !
The Carnival of *Holi* arrives,
All people would sport with colours and perfumes, why not thou and I ?
The month of *Phagun !*

Father-in-law : O wise and good queen-bride of my home !
Thou didst keep him for full twelve months !
What hast been thy gain, my daughter ?

Daughter-in-law : The smiles, the glances, the play and the laughter, O Rajajee ! the rapture, the old, old things.
Joy to our hearts' content, and love and gladness,
A thrill, a glow, two souls ripe in love,
And a little black-haired baby in my lap, an image of himself he gave me ! !

The Dialogue Song

(*A young woman is standing on the village well, drawing water and filling her earthen pitcher. A stranger, riding on a "blue mare," comes and molests her.*)

The Rider : O beautiful lady of the village !
Would you give me a palm full of water !

I am a traveller on my way, and
I feel athirst.

The Woman: I would gladly give you a drink,
traveller!
Our village well is sweet and
cool,
But mistake me not for a low-
born woman,
Nor mistake my rank from the
humble rural clothes I
wear,
I am the wife of him who is as
beautiful as the betel leaf
amongst leaves,
Cast no glances on me!

The Rider: The betel leaves are cheap, O
beauteous one!
Give up your husband and come
with me;
I will take you on my horse,
And offer you a hundred gifts.

The Woman: One could jump from a low roof
safely,
But how could one jump from a
high palace?
One could give up a bird or a
cage;
One could give up one's land and
home,
But how could one give up
self?
How can a woman give up her
husband?

The Rider :

May your pitcher break,
May your parents turn you from
their doors,
So that you wander helpless in the
fields ;
Then would I close my arms
around you.

The Woman :

May your blue mare die under
you,
And may you have to carry the
saddle on your head !
May your wife die at home,
May you besmear your hair with
ashes, and roam in grief all
over the land.

. . . . . .

Mother :

Why you stayed so long at the
well ?
Did some one beat you, or did
you beat some one ?
Why so late, and why so long ?
Did some ghost torment you ?
Or did you fall asleep on the well ?

Daughter :

Nor sleep, nor swoon, nor ghost,
mother !
A young man riding a " blue
mare " vexed me,
And asked for water. I would
have given him,
But he looked at me,
He looked at me and called me
names,
He spoke, and I spoke, and so I
have been long at the well.

Mother : What kind of young man was he ?

Daughter : He was riding on a " blue mare," swift and strong,
And though his accent was so bold to me,
He was a fine young man,
His stature was nobly high, and Heaven seemed to dwell in his brow,
His tresses fell in curls round his neck,
And his turban was like a lotus flower in the lake,
His bright eyes I still remember,
They are still haunting me, only with his hot foolish words he vexed me !

. . . . . .

Daughter (again) : But mother !
To-day who is our guest ?
Whose mare is on our manger ?
And whose clothes are on the peg ?
Whose bed is in our roof-room ?
And who is sleeping there ?

Mother : My lovely daughter !
This mare is thine and these clothes too !
Thy own husband is resting in the roof-room.

. . . . . .

The Wife (going up to his door) : Art thou awake or asleep ?

Or hast thou gone a-hunting in
thy dreams !
O good man that sleeps on my
father's roof,
Awake ! for the daughter of thy
host hath come and hath
been waiting long.

The Husband : I am nor asleep nor awake, O
good lady !
Nor have I gone a-hunting,
Remember your words at the
well,
You that have been so rude !

The Wife : I was wedded when I was in
dreams of myself, my toys,
my earrings and bangles,
And you did leave me when I
was but a girl,
And now you have come after
twelve, twelve years all so
long.
And how did you come ?
In the disguise of a beggar who
begs of me a palm full of
water at the village well !
Oh ! how could I know you after
so long !
I never saw your fine " blue "
mare,
Nor I ever heard your bitter-
sweet speech.
Oh ! how could I know you after
so long ?

The Man and the Woman

Peelân fruits are ripe in yonder lonely fields!
Come out, my love, and pluck with me the ripe,
red *Peelân* fruits!
Some are sour, some are sweet,
But *Peelân* fruits are ripe, my love!
Pluck the *Peelân* fruits, my love! and put them
in my basket!
As I pick up the *Peelân* fruits that fall to the
ground,
Behind the trees he leaves me in lonely, lonely
fields,
My basket is full of *Peelân*, ripe and red and round
and sweet,
But my love has left me in lonely, lonely fields.
In lonely, lonely fields alone!

The Folk Song of the Vairowal Shoe

My shoe from Vairowal, that shines aglint with
gold and silver threads;
O, the rare shoe from Vairowal!
A shoe like this suits a pretty woman,
But no other woman can wear it as I do!

Ah! the calamity,
They ask me to fetch water from the well;
And as I go to fetch water,
The dust settles, the water drops and my shoe
loses its lustre.

O, the rare shoe of Vairowal!
A shoe like this suits a pretty woman,
But no other woman can wear it as I do!

The jewel of my heart, who wears a crimson turban, is fast asleep on the roof-verandah !
He sleeps, and Eastern breezes touch his hair and pass,
And when he is asleep, I find time to steal to him and go and stand near his bed,
I wish to wake him up, he should welcome his beautiful wife !
O passing breezes ! tell the dreamer how my heart glows with fire ; tell him of my beauty and love.
Tell him of my pride and youth,
Tell him of my secret power,
Tell him that sleep is not half so delicious as love,
O breezes ! wake him, that he may see how my eyes are alight with passion's glow ; I am more beautiful than even myself.

The husband says :

No room on my bed, lady !
No room in my heart !
Stay there, O sweet lady !
And sit on the floor !
But I cannot talk with thee !
Nor have I any leisure to love.

(*The wife to herself, as she goes away*) :

He receives us not, there is no welcome in his heart,
We return as we came ;
His mind is poisoned, he loves some one else !
He values not our love, a gem that is thrown in dust,
He has no respect for our beauty nor the hidden pain of our heart.

Ah ! The suppressed pain of our heart and
silence may not hurt him, for it is both
a prayer and a curse ;
O let it not hurt him, let it not recoil on him !
Sometimes the little heart says it would, it
would pain him !
And again it prays, again, Oh ! it would not,
it would not hurt Him !

They ask me to fetch water from the well,
And as I go to fetch water,
The dust settles, the water drops, and my shoe
loses its lustre,
O, the rare shoe of Vairowal !
A shoe like this suits a pretty woman,
But no other woman can wear it as I do.

(*The following is one of the songs usually sung in chorus by girls when they go to invite the bridegroom for the marriage ceremony, late on the torch-lit night of wedding, as is the custom in the Punjab.*)

Late at night, late at night, when he is fast asleep,
I steal and stand near his bed to wake him,
The Bridegroom, the holy youth is fast asleep !
I strike him with flowers and sing !
" Awake, O youth !
Thy beauty waits for thee ! "

The whole world goes to see the moon,
And late at night, I go to see my love,
I rain flowers on him and sing,
" Awake, O dreaming youth !
Thy beauty waits for thee,"

Had I known, had I known
That he likes to sleep on a bed of roses,
I would have spread for him all the roses of the
town!
He is fast asleep,
"Awake, O holy youth!
Thy beauty waits for thee!

In green, fresh gardens, the golden parrots are
perching,
And I clap my hands to make them fly from bough
to bough;
I strike him with a branch of blossomed jasmine,
"Awake, awake, O self-intoxicated youth!
Thy beauty is cooing of love in the gardens of our
town!"

Had I known, had I known
He is a bird of passage,
Surely would I have thrown the nets of love
around!
Bring the nets of roses,
And catch him,
"Awake, awake, O free youth!
We come to hold thee captive in our arms!"

Dr. Ananda Coomar Swami, in his *Art and Swadeshi* has published a few translations of the music of the folk songs of the Punjab. Some of them, as rendered by him, are:

I

Aha, where Lachhi spills water,
Spills water, spills water, spills water,
There Sandal grows—where Lachhi spills water.

Aha, Lachhi asks the girls,
The girls, the girls, the girls,
Oh, what coloured veil suits a fair complexion ?

Aha, the girls said truly,
Said truly, said truly, said truly,
A veil that is black, becomes a fair complexion.

What, then, your fortune, Lachhi ?
Your fortune, Lachhi, your fortune, Lachhi, your
fortune, Lachhi,
Lo, your boy like the moon, what, then, your
fortune ?

Who'll give you milk to drink, Lacchi ?
Drink, Lachhi, drink, Lachhi, drink, Lachhi,
Your friendship with the goat-herds is sundered
Who'll give you milk to drink ?

. . . . . .

II

Thou who knowest my inmost self, Beloved !
Who knowest myself,
They sell parched grain in the market,
If Thou comest to my house, I would tell
Thee my sorrow and joy,
My Beloved who knowest myself.

Thou bowl of my dowry,
Thou bowl of my dowry,
I sent thee away at mid-day, but now I wish I
had not—
My Beloved who knowest myself.

Thou veil of my dowry,
Veil of my dowry,
I earn dishonour because of my friendship for Thee,
My Beloved who knowest myself.

On the high roof when I churn the butter,
When I churn the butter,
My parents rebuke me, thou alone can'st console—
My Beloved who knowest myself.

III

Come sometimes to our land, Oh, Raja of the hills, come sometimes to our land!
God make your country prosperous: were I a cloud I would pour down on my Beloved's land!
Come sometimes to our land!

Jasmine is blooming in my courtyard, and *Malti* gives scent near my bed!
O Beloved! thy service was in Jammu, but perforce thou must go to Kashmir,
I send letters, but get not one in reply, to tell of thy welfare!

IV

My Lord has not spoken, he sulks since the afternoon,
The wheat crops are ripe, the rose tree is in bloom,
I need not thy earnings, only come to the Punjab again!

You are setting on your journey, but I am left desolated,
Ah! the house and the empty court to fill me with fear.
The *Sakhis* are asking thee, Lovelorn Hir, by what merit you won Ranjha.
I left my spinning, I left my carding, Love indwelt in each pore of my body.
By this merit, O *Sakhis!* I won Ranjha.
When my lovelorn soul one moment forgot, that night Ranjha came not.

But to us this kind of play with the roses of youth is not the end. The husband represents to the wife, in a symbolic form, the person of the Great Poet, the Saint of God. And to the husband, the beloved wife and home life are the result of our love spendings; home life is where the foundations of an eternal shrine are laid in the love of man and woman and child. With us the deity of this temple is man, the beloved of the woman. We, too, have our poetry of the transition-period, but we know they are the toys of our adolescence. Life is more beautiful than the dream of youth that fixes the centre of happiness in childish toys.

Modern poetry, even the poetry of passion, has departed from the classic poetry of sex-relationship. We read in the Vedas of young girls going round the fire and singing :—

O God, who has three eyes;
Who sees the past, the present, and the future!
O fragrant God!
Thou knowest our husbands!

Take us away from the house of our parents to
the house of our husbands,
As the farmer takes the grain from the dry
coverings.

Until yesterday the maidens of the Punjab sang this song :—

Mother (*addressing the daughter who is standing in the shadow on the house floor by the burning oil lamp*) :

Why is my daughter standing thus to-day ?
Why is my daughter behind the pillar in the
shadows of the lamp ?

The Others :

Thy daughter is standing in the shadow of
the lamp,
The shadow of the lamp speaks to the father ;
Thy daughter yearns for the beloved.
Thus says thy daughter to her father,
' Pray, make me a bride,
Find me the man, fair as the Moon amongst
the stars,
And lovely as Krishna amongst men.
Find me my Krishna, father ! '

It is restraint in the intensity of her passion that makes a woman convert the *Shinghar* into a real poem. The Rajput daughter, Padmini, is in the fort ; the defending armies have fallen on their swords ; the Moghul is now entering the fort to take away the lady of the palace. The noble Padmini leaps into fire, so intense is her inner moral flame, so great her self-respect. The self-control of a woman's love is like

the deep silence of God. The poets may interpret it as they choose, but she is too deep for joy or pain. Nature is as animate and living to her as man is, and she tries to hide her passion from the Sun and the Moon, the water, the wind, the seeing stars; no one must know her secret. Daily used Sita to garland the house-god, but on the day she saw Shree Ram Chandra, she could not do so. The garlands fell from her hands and lay at the feet of the god. Her mother and the maidens guessed, from this little change of *Dhyanam*, that Sita worshipped Rama. We consider theatricality in *Shinghar* but the cheap art of a passing emotion. We honour the *Shinghar* of a *Satee*. Padmini forever ennobles the woman of the East. Our conception of woman, even in *Shinghar*, is that of a bride and a wife. No virgin can wear flowers or perfume, or dye her fingers with henna. Even in our poetry of passion, only that portion is considered poetic in which the sacredness of Divine life is in no way violated.

. . . . . .

Beauty is a thing of Heaven; it comes to us from on high. In his dramas Kalidasa is true to the great Oriental genius of his ancestors, when he paints Beauty as *Apsaras* of Heaven. When Dushyanta forgot his beloved Shakuntala, her mother from Heaven came and took her to *Kailash*. There she lived with celestials. Parbati is absolute divinity. King Dilip's wife, in Raghuvansha, is killed by the mere touch of the garland that slipped from the *Vina* of Rishi Narad, flying above King Dalip's territory. The garland fell from the edge of his *Vina* and reminded the beautiful lady of her celestial abode, whither she should hie in haste. Urwashi and her damsels all fly in mid-air. There is a subtle suggestion in all these plays that the garments of Beauty,

when they descend to earth, are soiled by the touch of earth; Death cleanses them by dipping the gold again in fire. Kalidasa in all his works makes it quite clear that the Rishi type of men, who lived in forests like Kanva, have been seared by the wisdom of the Hindu *Shastrâs* and they were signs of decadence, while life was glowing elsewhere, in Urwashi and Shakuntala.

. . . . . .

O Mother! Bring forth from thy soul a new life; be it courage, charity, or love, or else better be barren, be barren, waste not thy essence of life!

Such is our prayer.

. . . . . .

The wives of gods, men and animals endure their life
That a child be born to them! A child that shall be a new hymn to His praise, a new song of love be its name!

So do we philosophise.

However pleasant the dreams of youth, however fragrant the mango blossoms and the full-budded bushes of jasmine and rose, however inviting the moonlight above and the beaming faces of beautiful men and women below, the bell of the Caravan has rung, and we have loved in vain if we are not ready and impatient to march, hand-in-hand, to the distant shrine, as bond slaves of the Beloved. There does our God wait to take us into the secret of Immortality. Alas! we can tarry here no longer. We find that the *Shinghar*, poetry of passion, is likewise part of our religion, and an essential part, for through the errors of youth we learn to realise our God and Destiny.

VI

THE GITA GOBIND

When Love is Prayer

(This English rendering of the *Gita Gobind* is at once a translation, a condensation and an adaptation of Jaidev's famous pastoral drama. As I read the *Gita Gobind* in the original Sanskrit every verse rings in my soul with a different meaning to that usually given it by the Pandits. The beauty of its inner dream and trance bursts upon me as if my soul were meeting Jaidev and it becomes imbued with something of his lyrical personality. I may add that this English version came to me unbidden, spontaneously, like the song of spring-birds.—*Puran Singh*).

Introduction

The Unseen ! The Unseen !

The realities of Faith are there, above ; only their shadows move in the dark waters below. Jaidev catches the golden, heavenly shadows in his songs. How well he employs the music of forms to sing of that tense moment when the Beloved seeks the devotee. " I am the life of Bhaktas, but the Bhaktas are my life," we read in *Guru Grantha*. He employs the fiery sense of passion to colour his music ; he uses the highest symbols of life to make the love of God a reality to man. The loveliness of male and

female forms touching each other in the illusory dance of feelings, in the universal rhythm of moving limbs ; the forms that dance and melt again and yet again into themselves—it is a wholly subjective theme. These great cosmic illusions of Divine Beauty that, in spite of being so realistic, elude all grasp, are a thousand times more alive " with what beats within me " than the ascetic, shrivelled shadows of Deodar shivering with cold on the moonlit snows.

When the flute of the Sun-Krishna re-echoes in the soul of the earth a million flowers and leaves spring forth with up-spread arms to meet the lyrical soul. Is not this response akin to the dumb response made by the *Gopikas* of Vrindavanam to the call of His flute ?

A silent man, standing under a tree, suddenly shakes the gems in his crown, and the stars of heaven are moved in their courses !

What has any artist found in his art if his blind roots of life have not struck the soil in the Unseen ? Unless I have touched Him in the Infinite, of what use are my five senses ?

" Ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always." These words sum up those divine moments when God meets man and bestows on him the celestial vision and rapture of His higher life. Thenceforward the voice of the devotee sings ceaselessly the praise of a Christ-like life, in prayers and hymns whose accents are the flowers, the herbs, the faces of men and women and children, and whose rhythm is in the glimpses of the white-robed souls in the myriad forms of the Infinite. " Keep the figure of thy Beloved in thy eyes and live thrice blessed,"

says *Guru Grantha*. Having seen Him once, just as Mary saw Christ, I can paint His Figure deep on my soul, with a new joy at every touch of my own brush; and I wake again and again in fresh light to paint the figure of the Beloved, dipping my brush in the molten glory of one continuous thought of Him. I understand no other love; a meeting with Him, as Mary met Him, is true religion; I understand no other.

What is God to a real artist but this Figure, appearing before him and ravishing him by his life-giving glance in an everlasting surprise. "He is the Bridegroom and we on earth are all His Brides," says *Guru Grantha*. Some call Him Beauty, others Love.

When I love God, I wish to be beautified; the self-beautifying of a pure, holy feeling is the highest form of worship in the heart of all true religion. When the heavens burn with stars, I fancy they have seen Him coming; O, why should not I burn with youth in the expectation of Him?

When he calls I abandon myself to Him; casting aside my gems and jewels, my garments, knowing not whether I am naked, or clothed, but only following, following, following the voice of God wheresoever it calls me.

There are no chains on the feet of Life nor any ropes on its neck; it follows its own law as the hill stream follows its course, dashing against rocks, breaking its way over their heads. As molten gold the soul passes everywhere, allowing by its own nature neither dirt nor dust nor sin nor anything an entrance into itself which is not of Beauty Beauteous, of joy joyous.

Uninspired life is of equal value and on the same level, whether virtuous or vicious. What really makes a difference is the Live Glow of His Love when it

comes to man as a divine inspiration. A thousand sinners like Mary, before meeting the Master, and a thousand Marthas as pious house-wives, mean little, but Mary, after seeing the Master, is different from all others. She has news which none else has. Inspired life is the virtue absolute, all else is immaterial. Even piety, unkindled by this unknown Promethean fire, rings the death-knell of true religious feeling in man. Truly do the ancients declare that the path of life runs on the sword-edged ridge, and unless it is lit by constant inspiration from the higher life, it is death at every step ; it is impossible to keep straight by any self-made laws and principles of continuous watchfulness. They are all but outer light which does not help.

If Art, which is the perfume of the fully developed personality of man, or, in other words, *Religion*, is to be kept alive in an individual or a nation, it will have to go with all its inheritance of virtue or vice along this one path, and there is no doubt that the rebirth or the decadence of this artistic or religious feeling registers truly the rise or fall of man.

In the splendour of the Moghul court at its zenith we see the birth of an artistic feeling whose expression is called Moghul Art. But, as the latter lost touch with the perennial currents of inspiration, that very feeling soon degenerated into the sensuality of the harem life, the stupid coquetry of the court and the sentiments of rhyme-making, kissing and dancing with dead women, women killed for the purpose, in the lurid lamplight drinking the lie of it all even unto death ! Such was the rise and fall of the Moghul Empire ; such was the end of the Roman Empire ; and we have seen before our eyes yet another still more glorious empire tottering down this same perilous path—the Empire of the Vaishnava religion, whose

most beautiful book is *Gita Gobind*, by Jaidev. The singers have gone, the song remains still fresh and melodious.

Religion or Art, when alive with inspiration, needs all the passion and glow of youth, all the beauty of brilliant womanhood, free and vigorous, pure, glorious, luminous, intense, fierce like lightning as of Padmini, of Savitri, of Miran, of Nur Jahan, of the Sikh Kaulan, disciple of the Sixth Guru, as of Quratall-Ain, of the Persian *Bahaism*. What is man's life without woman? What is religion without the noble self-sacrifice of the woman? What is Art without her?

When man is alive, he is in touch with the "living man," as Carlyle calls him; he realizes and follows without following the inner moral law. Everywhere he is safe and secure; nothing can stop his way. It is on the heights of this absolute security that Jaidev composed this hymn. To the poet, it matters not to what use men, plunged into the darkness of life, put his poems. One can well take refuge from the fire of desire in a true artist like Jaidev, saying: Cool me, O creator of Beauty, with your poems and pictures; my little self burns me! Free me, O Master, with your supreme joy, for I am joy, and joy alone can free me! This is the higher freedom for the attainment of which the true poet sings for himself and for those who can catch his inspiration.

Renunciation is different from the abandoning of old asceticism. Jaidev preached his religion of Art many centuries before Goethe. Renunciation is naught to the poet but the seeking of the privacy of divine love for the still greater exuberance of union of man with God. Ah, to be alone with Him in utter nakedness of soul! Renunciation is spiritual kingship, it is graceful freedom of love. Sex-feeling on

this earth is as lightning covered with cloud, but in its glow is the birth of the truly poetic! Kalidas himself plies all the craft of his poetic genius round this feeling—its beauty, its purity and its life-giving power.

"Radhika went out in the moonlight, in the light of the white soft moon, white everywhere, wearing a white robe to meet her Lord. She thus concealed herself in the white and roamed as the light itself in search of Him!" (*Dashama Grantha, Guru Gobind Singh!*) This is true asceticism!

The privacy of love is sacred, it is the sign of true dedication; and complete dedication implies the exclusive possession of one whom we love as long as we are human. We see Radha feeling the inmost self-imposed injury, due to her sense of exclusive possession of her God. Exclusive possession is unphilosophical, but it is the highest concentration when the subject of love is the inmost reality of soul. Well does Indian womanhood say: Veil my love-lit face, it is for Him to see and for no one else. My virgin joy and beauty is for the highest man—the Beloved.

O my eye-lids drop, drop, and cover the shining orbs, till the buds are ripe!

O ages pass, closing on me my lowly door against the day and the night, for God is not yet born on earth as the sweetest youth of my heart!

O Intruder, I am the wedded one, I am His bride from the last birth! As a woman I can see no one else.

If you are a man, unveil me not!

Open not my eyes! He has not come, of what use is it to open them?

The desire of exclusive passion is thus devotion at its intensest point. It is transient, like the meeting of two souls in a loving glance; and it is immortal, like the union of man with God. Just as asceticism was misled by unbalanced monks into the rank wilderness of the forests, so was exclusive possession misled by the ignorant into the four walls of a grave-like house. In reality, the wings of the soul were two, intended to be flapped together for flight, but every one, in his age, tried to clip either one or the other.

In Radha, Sita, evermore glorious than herself in her freedom of soul, is reborn, fulfilled and completed. Radha is a unique personality in womanhood. After Radha, the brave Rajput princess, Miran, leads Radha's life. The type of this womanhood is celestial, luminous, iridescent, trance-dazzled, with no body-consciousness. It is balanced high in mid-air in a fateful poise like the Sun and Moon held in the palm of His Hands. That mystic womanhood of India represented by Radha and Miran, swings like the heavenly orbs on the everlasting music of the flute in the lips of the Unseen God. The very oceans of joy and power swell in the soul of this high womanhood and yet it moves over the face of our earth, as a fragile dream, a prayer from whose close eyes as tears drop one by one in continuous memory of the beautiful! "I am only two eyes looking for Him everywhere."

Truly Radha is the Bride of the Lord, whom Krishna flatters, caresses and fondles, seeks and seizes, implores, asks forgiveness, and eventually finds solace in Her soul of Love. The centuries pass by, bowing down before Radha, so sublime is her realization of Her own freedom. She is the ideal of all womanhood, self-realised, independent, God-

like, yet seeking the image of man. Sita is the woman of the past, Radha the woman of the future, not only of India, but of the whole world.

When in Jaidev's poem the naked buds of the young maidenly bosoms of Vindravanam are seen swelling up with the milk of love under the divine touch of His soul-coloured hands, as if under the touch supreme of self-felicity, the poetry of *Gita Gobind* surpasses the limitations of earth and enters those heavenly realms where nudity is divine, where the music of an all-pervading sex-feeling dominates the whole creation, as the brightest glow of life that cools, " satiates and nourishes " the soul, where, without the insistence of sex-feeling there is no life. Radha and Krishna call each other, " cooler of all desire." The life portrayed by Jaidev is that of two lovers eternally separated from each other, panting for each other, one on earth, the other in Heaven, yet both meeting in felicitous union for just one perfect moment of a dream, in a trance, in the super-thought ! It is the portrait of our life—naught but the fluttering of the wings of an arrow-pierced bird, pierced from the Unknown, from the Unseen ! This poem is the portrait of love, in colours of a strange lyrical self-felicity.

The setting of *Gita Gobind* pulsates with the poet's passion. Jaidev's devotion to Krishna is a fragrant grove of whispering young leaves, the green bowers of the creepers of *Malti* and jasmine, bending down with the full blossom of the Spring. Around his devotion blow soft, camphor-laden zephyrs, wet with the cooling music of the blue, singing Jamuna. His devotion is surrounded by the spirit of creation, swelling high into the spring floods of glory. Jaidev finds himself surrounded by the divine exaltation that

is universally accentuated by sex, and he pants like a wounded bird for the all-pervading spell of the sweetest union-moment, which often has, during its delicious approaches, half-moments of misunderstanding and doubt.

The whole song of the *Gita Gobind* is pervaded by that supreme creative feeling which divides reality into the two illusive forms of male and female, and makes them dance like two flames of life, till the measure of perfection is fulfilled by all forms vanishing again into one.

In the unseen region of Self, where the soul of man vibrates alone with pure passion above the hushed mind—all subjective—there comes to him the deeper realization of beauty ; and our poet, in a trance of higher inspiration, sings the whole romance of man and woman in his own pure feelings. *Gita Gobind* is the gift to us of a highly lyrical genius that has boldly caught the fiercest flames of the human heart and dashed them in a glory of divine frenzy back on the Heavens to announce love on this earth. Of all persons, Jaidev knows that the purity and richness of the sex-feeling is the richness of sincerity itself. Love without sex is unthinkable, at least on this earth. Youth soaked with the reddest wine of this feeling is the image of that higher and hidden life beyond death, where sex, in the shape of love, is the only vesture of soul.

GITA GOBIND

Characters :

(*All of the characters are Trance-figures, made of the celestial light of soul, with no coverings but of leaves and flowers of light.*)

Krishna : *The ultimate reality, the Boy-dancer of Vindravanam, the Beloved, the blue figure made of pure thought. The whole azure sky, as it were, is reduced in the Devotee's consciousness first to the form of a twilight haze of an idea, then to the dim outlines of a Figure of Love made of the Light celestial which appears to begin with as the evanscent glow of a face, a fleeting glance, a motioning Hand. It is an ever-flying Figure, now appearing, now disappearing. As veils lift and the gaze of the devotee becomes fixed on Reality, it comes to him as the life everlasting. The devotee's inspired* Dhyanam *incarnates God in its own Love-vision, and this God-figure, like an ambrosial fluid permeates the whole being of the devotee, thenceforward forever inseparable. He is the ultimate fulfilment of Life, Humanity, Divinity, Religion, Art in all ages, for every form of life ; the one Beloved of man, woman,*

bird and tree—"The One Self-existent whom the sages proclaim in different ways." The self Supreme, the subject.

RADHA: *The devotee—the Bride of the Lord. The humanity that thirsts for the divine Glimpse, that hungers for the divine Union, and suffers pain at being separated from its own inner Godhead.*

DAMSELS: *Voices of ages.*

GOPIKAS: *All fellow creatures, the Brides of God.*

(*The scenes are laid in Vrindavanam, the Forest of Beauty, opened to the enraptured eye of the Devotee.*)

MANGALACHARANAM

(Prologue—A hymn of praise to the Ten Incarnations of VISHNOO. To be chanted by all the Gopikas, damsels and actors but Krishna, gathered in one throng.)

O Great Fish of the flood of the beginning of Creation, that bore light in its heart and swam in waters!
Hail, hail to Thee! O Lord of Creation!

O Mysterious Tortoise! that bore the golden earth of ours out of those waters of the Deep on Thy back and brought it out!
Hail, hail to Thee! O Lord of Creation!

O Space-eating Animal! on whose white tusk this globe is a speck, like the small dust stain on the moon!
Hail, hail to Thee! O Lord of Creation!

O Lion-formed God! thou that with thy claws didst tear the belly of *Hiranyakashyap?*
Hail, hail to Thee! O Lord of Creation!

O Dwarf! thy three steps measured all the created worlds, and there was no space left for thy fourth,
And whenever thy nails scar the Earth, a hundred Ganges of nectar flow out to bless man,
Hail, hail to Thee! O Lord of Creation!

O Baldeva ! Thou the God that came to us as the first Ploughman, the white man who wears black cloud-like garments that shine on Thy limbs like the blue-waters of the Jamuna,
Afraid of the stroke of Thy ploughshare, the Jamuna flows !
Hail, hail to Thee ! O Lord of Creation !

O Parasharama ! thou who arguest with axe and cuttest down life that bows not its head to God the beautiful, the good !
Hail, hail to Thee !

O Rama ! thou the destroyer of the ten-headed demon,
Hail, hail to Thee ! that comest to us as the wearer of the Glorious body of Shri Ram Chandra !

O God ! That camest to us as Buddha !
The God of compassion, knowledge and charity !
Hail, hail to Thee !

O Wearer of the Sword ! Thou the destroyer of Evil Ones !
The Avtar of the Kali Yuga !
Hail, hail to Thee ! O Kalkidhar !

O Beloved Hari ! Hail, hail to Thee !
Over Thy ear shake the bejewelled curls,
And the garlands of the forest flowers hang from Thy neck to Thy feet,
And Thy bosom quivers and meets the bosom of the Goddess Lakshmi !
Thou, the Swan of the Mansarowar of the Saints,
Thou, whose shadow is the splendour of the Sun,

Thou, the deliverer from the Bondage of the clay-bound being,
Hail, hail to Thee, O Beloved Hari !

Thou, that un-venomed the pride-venom of the king of serpents, the Kali-serpent,
Thou, whose beauty joy-conquers everything,
Thou, the Lotus of the Race of Yadavas, the Sun !
Hail, hail to Thee, O Beloved Hari !

Thou, the joy of Angels, the Destroyer of Evil ones, the rider on the wings of the Heavenly Eagle, the one cause of Glory of the Race of the gods !
Hail, hail to Thee, O Beloved Hari !

Thou, whose eyes are like the pure petals of the lotus, whose glance is the Salvation from the Earth-sorrow,
The Creator of all the three worlds !
Hail, hail to Thee, O Beloved Hari !

Thou, who wert once the Adorner of Sita with Thy passion,
Thou, the Victor over ten-headed Ravana in a righteous war,
Hail, hail to Thee, O Beloved Hari !

Thou, who art beautiful in Thy azure colour, like the new rain bearing purple cloud,
Thou, that like the Bird, fliest towards the Moon-like face of the Goddess Lakshmi,
Hail, hail to Thee, O Beloved Hari !

This is the song of joy by Jaidev—
Joy to those who sing it,

It is the song of the pure;
The song of the illumined;
The song of the trance of the Devotee's love;
The song in the privacy of the soul, in its own deep solitude,
Hail to Thee, O Beloved Hari!

(*All others stop, and one of the party announces the drama as follows*) :—

O Songsters! Sing my song, which is moist with the fresh saffron-touch that the saffron-painted breasts of the goddess Lakshmi have just left on the Breast of God, as they embraced each other in the Perfect moment of ecstacy;
My song is warm and breathless with the breathlessness of the trance of union, and it glistens with the pearl-sweat of life.
In my song, Lakshami meets her Lord of Creation.

In my song is the Spring-bodied Radha, whose limbs are made of the beauty of the flowers of the *Mâdhavi* creeper,
And in my trance, there is she in the trackless forests in search of Him, restless at not finding Him, and burning with the Glory of His love.
And listen to what fair damsels say to the Love-oppressed Radha.

(*Exit all*).

Scene I

(*A pleasure garden in Scrub-forest, with flower bowers and other trysts. Radha is seated in a shade,*

and yonder like a vision on a high level Krishna is dancing with a hundred brides of Vrindavanam.)

(*Enter a damsel*) :

Damsel : O Radha ! The Flame-bodied Love, that oppresses the brides when in separation from their lovers who have gone abroad on travels and have yet not returned, though Spring is in blossom everywhere ; that very self-robed figure that thou art seeking in the forest-groves is known to me !

There is He dancing in celestial concourse with the beautiful Brides of Vrindavanam !

There, yonder, where the subtle breezes laden with odours of clove and Sandal blow softly !

Yonder, under those flowery bowers on whose spray of branches hang clusters of the honey-sucking bee.

Yonder, where the cuckoo is piercing all hearts with her mystic love-cry !

O Radha ! it is Spring !

How the new shoots and the first flowers of the *Tamala* perfume like the musk-pods,

And how the *Palasa*'s blossoms flame red like the golden finger-nails of the Kamdeva,[1]

And by their colour excite the hearts of love-oppressed youth with amorous frenzy !

[1] Equivalent of Cupid.

And how the blossoms of *Nagkessar* dance in the air, as the golden staff that goes before, as a symbol of honour in reception of Kamdeva by Spring itself.

And how the clusters of the black bees, on their transparent wings, dart towards the full-spread flowers, as if they have been shot like a rain of arrows from the rainbow-coloured bow of Kamdeva !

And how the orange tree, shivering with joy in its full white blossom, seems to laugh at the pain of those who are still pining in love !

And how *Keora* pierces the hearts of the love-wounded ones with the keen-edged aroma of its spears !

O Radha ! it is Spring, that thrills with love divine even the hearts of those who have controlled all their passions.

It has come laden with flowers, it has come as the unbidden, uncontrolled rapture of youth !

Look yonder ! where even the sleeping mango tree, clasped by the delicate creeper, grows conscious with love and quivering with joy, bursts out in those tender purple shoots !

The Spring wakens life.

O Radha ! yonder there on the bank of the river Jamuna, in the groves watered by its blue limpid waves, Shri Krishna is playing with the brides of Vrindavanam !

O Radha ! look how the spring breezes, like the breath of Kamdeva, inflame the hearts of pining ones, by throwing all about the wilderness the fragrance of the fallen pollen dust of the half-opened flowers of *Keora*.

O Radha ! how the blossom-spray of the Mango softly shakes under the weight of the passion of the black humming bees, and how in perfect tune of its amorous motion, the *Koel* trills forth its wild lyric, maddening the hearts of lovers separated from each other !

Surrounded by this melodious passion of the vast life, poor travellers quicken their paces to meet the beloved and their hearts beat high with hopes of joy that is so near !

Radha ! We have reached ! Look ahead, there you can now see Him that dances with a hundred Brides !

O Radha ! Have you seen Him ?

There is He, the sky-coloured figure
anointed with sandal and enrobed
in gold, wearing a garland made of
wild flowers and forest leaves !
And see how the curls of his tresses fall
on his temples, as He sports hand
in hand with a hundred brides.
The smiling Krishna, in his soul-youth,
is thrilling with joy the whole of
Creation !
How He stirs the blood in Life's veins !
In His presence, all flowers quiver with
sheer delight !
There a bride, in the full intoxication of
her youth, comes from behind and
clasps Him to her ample breasts,
bursting into a love song !
There another, love-frenzied by the
liquid glances of Krishna, has fixed
her gaze on the flower-Face of the
Madhu Sudana !
Another deceives Him, feigning to speak
with Him in secret, steals up to His
glowing temples, imprints a kiss on
Him, and her every hair quivers
with ecstacy ;
Her face grows translucent with
bliss !

And look, what celestial hues sparkle
round her radiating cloud of love-
thoughts,
She is deluged with pleasure.

And yet another takes Him in the flowing waters
of Jamuna and catches Him in
her silken shawl,

And look, He stands yet alone, under the *Kadamb* tree on the banks of the Jamuna, with His flute at his lips !

And as He raises his flute to His lips, they all dance !

The very clay of Vrindavanam grows lyrical and sings !

Look ! even the bangles of the *Gopikas* make music as they toss their arms aloft,

And their limbs and robes dance with that self-same dream-tune of Krishna.

As they dance with Him in perfection,

He admires the perfect motion of their bodies ! And how He showers smiles upon them !

See Radha ! How well this one Music-maker makes a hundred brides dance with Him !

And as they dance, He embraces one, kisses the second, and dances with the third !

How He smilingly looks askance on that stray, beautiful girl, and follows the singing steps of still another !

Look Radha ! Is He not all Love ? He swells the breast of the Universe with His Love,

And His limbs of Glory, beautiful as those of the Blue-Lotus, celebrate in themselves the festival of *Kama !*

How all brides of Vrindavanam feel the thrill of His universal embrace in this fleeting season of Spring!

Scene II

A shady corner. (Radha does not join the dance. She feels annoyed with Krishna's liberality of love and retires into a deeper shade, seated in a meditative posture.)

Radha: In this forest I meditate on Him, my Beloved!
How His lips incarnadined pour out floods of melody.
I see His flute at His lips and His fingers on His flute,
Ah! His moving lips touch my lips!
And His fingers touch my heart!
How His ear-rings shake with the liquid rhythm of His trembling Flute, His laughing eyes, His waving forehead, His dancing flesh!
I think of Him, whose presence puts these Brides into a maddening frenzy of Love!
I think of Him, who is dancing perfection with a hundred Brides!
He is my Krishna.

I meditate on Him, whose body is the colour of the purple cloud, adorned with the rain-bow in the sky, whose tresses are embellished with peacock feathers that ripple with a hundred crescents,

I meditate on Him, who is greedy of kissing the beautiful faces of a hundred brides; who lights the glory of His face by the light of His smiles!

I meditate on Him, who embraces a thousand *Gopikas* in the vast circle of His arms; and the light of whose gems, upon His hands, His feet and His wrists, has vanquished the darkness of my heart.
I think of my Krishna!

I meditate on Him, upon whose blue forehead the *Sandal-tilak* shines more softly than the Moon in the sky,
And who swells the bosoms of a hundred brides with His Love.
His figure moves in all hearts,
And His touch fills life with passion.
I think of my Krishna!

I meditate on Him, whose beauty steals my soul,
Whose body is Cupid-limbed,
Upon whose temples rest His tresses in clustering curls,
Who wears the robe of gold,
And in whose cooling shades repose both men and gods.
The generous, beautiful Krishna!
He is mine!

I meditate on Him who met me under
the sacred *Kadamba* tree.
And who destroyed the fear of the
horrors of Kaliyuga,
And who, by casting His love-
creating glance upon me, knitted
me with Himself in this strange
union-in-separation !

(*Enter Damsel.*) *Radha, turning to her :*

O comrade mine !
Take me to Him, that like a lover's
meeting is concealed in secret places,
And who is now satiated with the
joy of dancing !
Take me to Him from these groves
of trees whose leaves shade me and
separate me from Him,
I am mad with love, my mind
wanders in all directions for Him,
My flesh quivers with the pain of
that rare passion for Him,
O let me meet my Krishna now !

O comrade !
Take me to Him whose beauty
unlaces all my garments, whose
memory makes my song sweet and
lovely,
And who through one glance takes
me into Himself and Himself into
me, who weds me without ceremony,
a new wedding at every new meeting
with Him.

I think of Krishna, who still stands apart from all, under the *Kadamba* tree !

O comrade mine ! tell me what I should do ?
My mind renounces me and goes to Him who is fond of dancing with a hundred brides,
O what can I do ?
My mind can find no fault in Him, for it is always busy in thinking of His beauty.
What can I do ? Even if, in my pride, I turn away from Him, I still can do nothing but think of Him.
I can no more live here, my comrade !
Take me to Him whose beauty makes me surrender my all, for ever.
O let me now meet my Krishna !

O comrade ! take me to Him who gathered me in His arms and kissed me, as I sat on a bed of forest leaves
And who lay for hours in rapture, resting on my bosom,
And who has tasted the devotion of my lips.
O let me now meet my Krishna !

O comrade ! take me to Him whose temples are translucent with the glow of passion,
And whose eyes are closing with the ecstacy of joys !

And whose body is moist after the dance,
O let me now meet my Krishna!

O comrade! my head is strewn with flowers,
And my voice has grown sweet as a *Koel's*,
And my breast has felt the touch of his finger-tips, soothing my flesh,
And my being already knows in pure fancy the joy of union!
O let me meet my Krishna!

O comrade!
Jewelled anklets ring upon my feet,
Around my little waist hangs the singing girdle of silver bells;
Let me lie in His embrace, who knows the joy of me,
And who, maddened by my sweetness, holds me by the hair, raises my face up to Himself, and imprints a kiss on me already in my intense thought of Him.
Oh! I tremble and shake with love!

Scene III

(*A different aspect of the Garden. Radha's meditation and pain of love draws the heart of Krishna, who gives up the dance and seeks Radha in the forest. Not finding her anywhere, he takes His seat under a tree.*)

Krishna: O! Why did not I pay due honours to my Radha? Finding me with

a hundred other dancers, her pride
of possessing me wholly for her-
self is hurt, she has turned away
from me in anger.
O ! I did not mean to tease her.
Now what should I do to please
her ?

What pangs must be wrenching her
heart,
Self-separated from me she injures
herself.
O what should I do to restore her
to myself !
What is my wealth of beauty with-
out her ?
What is my life without her joy ?
What is my dwelling without her
adorning it ?

I meditate on her,
Whose face is incarnadined by
anger against me,
And whose eye-brows are knitted
in momentary wrath,
I think of her face, which at this
moment looks like the red lotus,
with a faint black line of bees.

I meditate on her,
Who is seated in my heart, with
whom I always am, when I turn
inward,
Shall I search her again in the
forest, one who is already within
me ?

O Beloved! I see thy mind is troubled
accusing me of what I did not do,
And I know not where thou hast gone, and where I shall go after thee,
So I sit here and meditate on thee!

O Beloved! I see thee in me,
Without me wherever I look, I see nothing but thee,
And yet, why dost thou not come and embrace me?

O Beloved! forgive me my sins that are past,
And I will not do what thou thinkest to be wrong hereafter,
But, O Beautiful One! Come to me!
Cool me, for I am burning with the fire of thy love.

O Beloved! thou who givest me victory over Kama!
As thou art not with me, come quick and look how the Kama has arrayed his world-conquering weapons against me!
There is His bow made of black bees,
There are his arrows made of amorous glances!
And all his weapons of desire that he shoots at me through the corner of some one's eyes!

O Kama ! I am not Shiva thy foe, that thou hast arrayed thyself so formidable against me,
Mistake me not for Shiva ; these are not the serpents round my neck, nor is this Shiva's blue poison-streak ;
I only wear the garland of the blue lotus !

And it is not ashes that besmear my body, but the Sandal that I have painted to keep myself cool, for I burn in separation from my lover !

O why dost thou assail me, who am pining for the love-offerings that are in her heart !

O Kama ! take not in thy hand the arrow of the mango flowers to strike me ;
And if thou hast taken it up, shoot not at me with your bow ; spare me, for I am waiting for my lover !

O Kama ! thou hast already conquered the world,
What glory is it to thee to conquer me who am already conquered by my lover's love !
I am pining by myself, separated from that gazelle-eyed one.

Instead of Kama come out thou, O subtle-bodied Radha,

And strike my heart with the arrow of thy glance shot from the bow of thy eyebrows!
And show me thy black tresses that curl round thy face, out of which Kamdeva himself has had his birth!
And put me to that divine drowsiness of love-infatuation by touching me with the rubies of thy lips!
And teach me the everlasting joy of thy full-grown breasts that, despite thy anger, still swell with love for me and breathe-in my breath!

Ah! what use is the sense of touch to me, if I have not thy form, O Beloved! to touch?
What use is the sense of sight to me, if I cannot drink thy love-glance at me?
What use is the sense of smell to me, if I smell not the fragrance of thy lotus mouth?
What use is life, if I have not thy song to satiate myself?

O wonder! I meditate on her, and think of her; and yet my pangs of separation from her increase every moment!

(*Enter a damsel and approaches Shri Krishna seated in the bamboo-grove on the bank of the flowing Jamuna, deeply absorbed in thought.*)

The Damsel : O Krishna ! Dost thou not know the torment of Radha's soul, separated from thee ?
She is a perpetual prayer, whose fulfilment art Thou.
Afraid of the arrows of Kamdeva, she has fled and taken shelter in Thee, her soul is not in her frame ;
She curses the sandal-anointings ; and the moon-beams wound her deep.
And the breezes that blow from southern sandal and spice forests are to her the poisonous breaths of snakes that curl round the Sandal-tree !

O Krishna ! Radha faints ! she knows not her body !
She lives in Thee.
As Cupid rains his flower-arrows on her, she shields her breast with bedewed petals of lotus, thus exposing herself to the rain of arrows, come what may, and concealing her child-Krishna safe in her heart that no arrow may strike Him !

O Krishna ! Radha is making preparations for thy welcome in her heart : " O where shall my Beloved rest," so saith the insane Radha,
And forthwith spreads a bed of

flowers for Thee in her heart,
Her bed seems like the bed spread on the flaming flower-arrows of Kama,
And she imagines already the joy of Thy coming and embracing her.

O Krishna! The lotus-faced Radha is transfigured, and from her eyes trickle tears like a stream of nectar!

O Krishna! She outlines in musk a portrait of Thy cupid-limbed body and places it before herself, and with a twig of mango-blossom in her hand, she worships Thy portrait and prays: "O Lord of Lakshmi! I lie at Thy feet, O Beloved! Leave me not, Go not away!
If Thou turnest away from me, this cooling moonshine is enough to burn me to ashes.

O Krishna! This is Radha that, renouncing all, thinks only of Thee, inaccessible of all,
And thinking of Thee always, she now bursts out into cries, then into laughter; now she weeps in agony, then she suddenly rises and rushes out of doors.

To her, without Thee, the beautiful palaces are like an empty wilderness,
And to her, without Thee, the garland of the crowd of her damsels round her is a crushing net,
And, without Thee, the delicious fever of self-joy is like the wind-blown leaping flames of fire.
She is bewildered like a doe pursued by the lion of the world-desire, running hither and thither in search of Thee, and even while running, she looks back at the pursuing desire as if it is Death, and appeals for rescue to Thee!

O Krishna! Without Thee she is lifeless!
The garland of lotus decorating her breasts is a burden to her, as an invalid is impatient of the weight of her ornaments,
And she looks with dismay on the sandal-anointings of her body, as if they were poisonous.
She is impatient of her breath, too, and endures her own life as weariedly as the hot flame of the world-Desire.

Look there! how she is wildly throwing her glances all round,

and her looks fall as if lotuses plucked from the lotus-stems are being bestrewn all over!

And as thou hast not yet come to her, she considers the very bed of flowers she had made for Thee would burn her down as if it were fire.

And look! now Radha fixes her gaze on Thee, having left her chin on her palm and forgotten it there;
Her face in that posture looks like the moon caught in the hand of a child that would not let it go!

O Krishna! the separation from Thee is her death, and as the dying monk mutters his prayers, she is repeating thy name and is sinking softly with her breathings—Hari! HARI! HARI!

O Krishna! Thou, the beauty of the Ashwini Kumaras! Strange is the state of Radha. Some times her hair stands on end, some times she shivers with cold, at other times she begins to weep, some times her whole frame quakes and trembles, some times she falls into despair.

She fixes her mind on Thee, she talks wildly and swoons away, and these are the symptoms of her *Dhyânam* unfulfilled !

That Beauty-limbed lady needs but one cure, and that cure art Thou ! Shine on her thought !

If Thou reachest her not, she shall surely die !

If Thou wouldst cure her not, if Thou coolest not her fever of love by the balmy touch of Thine, if Thou curest her not, the one who is worth curing ; what are we to think of the Divine comradeship ?

Now even one moment of separation from Thee is like death to her !

So have the love-waitings wasted her thought, that she thinks the sandal laid on her limbs a poison, and the lotus garlands on her breasts a weight !

She is still alive because her mind is fixed in *Dhyânam* on Thee, the COOL ONE, the BREATH of LIFE !

O Krishna ! How can Radha, that hath never before been separated from Thee, even for a

moment, outlive this moment of the blossomed mango without Thee ?

Scene IV

(*Radha seated self-absorbed. Enter a damsel.*)

Damsel : O Radha ! separated from Thee, Krishna too is pining for Thee ! When the Southern Sandal winds blow and the blossoms are a-glow with passion,
He in His full Beauty, waits for Thee.

O Radha ! When the humming of the honey-gatherers falls on Him, He closes his ears !
And overwhelmed by the beauty of clouds, He pines for Thee.

O Radha ! Krishna has left His palaces and wanders sad for Thee in the wilderness,
He sleeps on bare earth and mutters thy name—" Radha ! Radha ! Radha ! "

O Radha ! look there, when he hears the voice of the *Koel,* He mistakes it for thine and runs after it saying " My Radha has come ! "

And when He sees happy people laughing, He first thinks they are laughing at Him, so sad for love of a woman, and then He says " No ! No ! they are only laughing."

O Radha ! when He hears some stray ringing of bells,
He wonders if it be the melodious tinkling of the silver bells on thy feet.
And He is reminded of the sound of the bells that hang round thy waist.
Even some one calls out thy name,
He repeats it like an echo, as if it were His own song of love !
And He thinks of none but thee !
On that very spot where He met thee once in the holy garden,
He waits for Thee,
And longs to be folded again in thy embrace.
O Radha !
Go where He has gone to wait for thee !
And stay not, for the moment of union approaches !
Where the Sandal perfumes blow,
And the blue Jamuna flows.
And His hands invisible, restless pass touching the full-grown breasts of the Brides of Vrindavanam.
Meet Him there, the God who robs the very heart of Cupid of his self,
And whose body shines with gems of truth,
The Lord of Life is there having taken all the peace of union with Him !

Hie! Hie! O Radha! in haste thither.

There He has put His flute to His lips and is singing thy name!

And He honours the very dust that touching thy body is blown to Him by winds!

Shri Krishna spreads for Thee a bed, when the birds towards the night-fall return to their nests.

And when the leaves on the forest trees rustle with the evening breeze, He turns round to see if thou hast come!

In this deep silence, now take the anklets off thy feet for they are restless,

And enter the deep shades of the forest where darkness lives!

And enrobe thyself in blue lotuses!

And be nothing but the naked Soul!

And lie on the bosom of Krishna, where hangs that offered garland, and where only the blessed Devotees can reach; the bosom that quivers like a rain-cloud with the passion for its devotees!

How well thou, O Gold-coloured One! wouldst shine on the azure vast of His bosom,

O Lotus-eyed One! on the bed of the flowers wait for Him!

Thou that are now joy-naked, and whose rare Divine beauty shines on the waves of thy silver legs!

O Radha! Hie! Hie in haste to Him! For He waits for thee for a while, If thou reachest not, the PROUD ONE will vanish into Himself!

O Love! why dost thou not see! How tired is thy Beloved waiting for thee!

How He sighs and His eyes wander in all the directions looking for thee, And He returns again and again to His bowers and spreads a welcome for thee again and again!

O Foolish Radha! Haste, haste to Him!
The whole day is gone in leading thee on!
Now the sun is about to set, and the shades of union arrive!
Knowest thou not how delicious is meeting Him?

Delicious as the meeting of a man and a woman that, not knowing each other and yet loving each other, meet perchance in the utter darkness of a lonely night; as delicious as is to their ears the mystic sound of the slowly approaching steps of Beauty. Ah! unlike everything else as delicious as the embrace of God and man in the trance of eternal silence!

(*But Radha is too weak with joy to walk, so the damsel, seating her there, goes to Shri Krishna.*)

Scene V

(*Shri Krishna, seated in a bower of Jasmine.*)

Damsel: O Krishna, Quaffer of the Nectar of the ruby lips of Radha! there is she in the loneliness of herself waiting for Thee!
And she cannot come to Thee, for her desire of meeting Thee overcomes the power of her limbs!
And her life is still staying in her pain-emaciated frame, as she has faith that Thou wouldst come to her!
And in her child-like joy, she has made bracelets of white Jasmine and wears them!
She is so much lost in thought of Thee that she says that she is Krishna!
And again and again she bursts out singing:
"O why cometh He not yet.
Here to me where no one else is,
But my burning self?"
She startles with delight at the sight of the approach of the dark cloud at the evening time,
"There comes my Krishna," she cries!
And runs after the dark clouds of the evening as if it wert Thou.
When in the loneliness of her welcome Thou dost not steal to her unaware from behind,
She throws off all her veils,
And cries for Thee and weeps bitter tears of sorrow!

Scene VI

(*Radha seated by herself, musing.*)

Radha : Alas ! The Beloved hath not yet come,
the tryst is all lonely !
In vain is my beauty !
In vain is my youth !
Oh ! my comrades have misled me here
in the wild loneliness,
Where is my refuge ?
He has not come to me, for whom I
dared the fearful night of the
forests,
I must now die !
I would not live in these forests.
Does my Krishna take me to be a
creeper of the forests that He heeds
not my prayers and thinks not of
me ?
O why has He not come to this
bamboo-sheltered solitude ?
Has He begun playing again with
some bride of merit, a song, a dance,
a glance, a throng, a trance again,
is it ?
Or has the darkness of night misled
Him and is He still seeking for me ?

(*Enters a damsel.*)

Pray comrade ! say have you seen my
Krishna dancing ?
Pray, say, O comrade mine !
Has my Krishna been entrapped
by one greater than me in devotion ?

O my beloved friend! Dost thou know how the Moon, the saintly accomplice of Love, shines!
Ah! the Moon shines like my Krishna's face when He pines in separation from me!
And this moon covers my first pang with the memory of His face, just for a while, but the very memory makes the pang ever acuter!

(*Here opens, far off from Radha, a scene in which Krishna is playing with* Gopikas.)

Radha, to the damsel:

Look! there is my Krishna loitering on the moonlit banks of Jamuna,
And how He lifts the love-bright face of a *Gopika*, as if to imprint His kiss.
But no! He anoints her forehead with the *musk-tilak* with His own hands, as if He is painting the Moon again, as it had been at the time of the first Creation, with the dark Moon-stains!
Look! there my Krishna is adorning the cloud-like hair of that girl with the flowers of *Piyavasa* that have the sparkling lustre of the lightning!
And my Beloved love-spoilt youth is gazing at her tresses where hides forever the Kama!
Look! there my Krishna is decorating another beauteous bride with diamonds placing them on her musk-

besmeared breasts, as if He is circling the two moons with a cluster of stars, as when He first created the Heavenly bodies !

Look ! there is my Krishna dallying with still another beautiful maiden ! How he takes both her white, soft arms, more beautiful than the two lotus stalks and as cooling as the crystal snowy glaciers !

And adorns them with bracelets set with emeralds !

Oh ! He is painting lotus-blossom, on whose petals are seated the black bees !

Look ! my comrade ! there is my Krishna, playing with that beautiful naked girl, fixing a jewelled girdle round her waist ; see how He swings it still further down, where Kama has his throne of Gold !

And look ! there that Brother of Baldeva is again sporting with a hundred Brides !

O why should I stay in this flesh ! When my waiting here is of no avail !

Damsel : O Beloved Radha ! If He has not come, that bitter, bitter foolish boy, why dost thou grieve ?

It is His pleasure,

He is in the music of a hundred dances,

And see how my soul in vast

expanse of love flies out of me to Him even there!
Why wait for Him here, why not fly to Him everywhere?

Radha: O comrade! The woman who has seen my Krishna, who hath large eyes like the full opened lotus, is no more subject to the wounds of the arrows of the Cupid,
The woman that has found her flower-bed with Him is beyond all sorrow.
The woman that has heard His speech, sweet as nectar, soft as jasmine-blossoms, can no more be burnt by memories excited by the Sandal winds from the South,
The woman that has been touched by His flower hands and His flower feet, is no more affected by the moon-beams.
The woman who hath tasted Him, whose colour is like the purple rain-cloud, never doth feel the pangs of separation, nor this agony can have any terror for her;
The woman that has been drawn out like a streak of Gold on the touch-stone by Him who wears the Golden Robe, and who has been thus perfected by Him is beyond all jealousy.
The woman that hath known but one Man, the only One Man in all the created worlds, has passed

beyond the sorrows of passion that
the worship of Cupid produces.
O my beloved companion !
I know all this,
And yet He is the Man and I the woman,
And my heart, in spite of me, goes after
Him,
And this cool breeze seems to me like
the breath of fire,
And the Moonlight seems very poison,
O strange, strange is this hidden un-
known passion of my soul for Him !
Come, O Sandal breeze ! And vex me if
thou desirest !
Come, O Kama ! and take my very life
if thou desirest !
But O Jamuna ! the sister of Death,
why shouldst thou not feel for thy
sex, come with thy waves and lave
my heated frame to rest !

Scene VII

(*After a lonely night in search of Him, Radha meets Krishna at Dawn of day, when He is very sweet. very submissive and devoid of all naughtiness.*)

Radha, indignantly : O Keshava ! O Lord of
Lakshami ! why dost thou come
to me.
Go away ! go away !
O Lotus-eyed One ! Go to the hundred
Brides whose dance pleases thy
heart.
Do not tell me lies,

Thou hast passed the whole night dancing with a hundred beautiful ones,
Thy eyes are red as they had no sleep,
And thy body is langourous, the sign of thy whole night's waking!
O Krishna! how canst thou deceive me when thy ruby lips betray thee, thy lips are stained with kissing the blackness that adorned the eyelids of the beautiful Brides of Vrindavanam.
And thy body bears the crescent-marks of the nails of those who bruised thee in the intensity of their passion,
And there are love-stains of the crimson Mehdi dye of their music-making feet, and this dye betrays thy night-revels as the new red-shoots of the spring betray the heart of life!
O Krishna! My heart aches, seeing the injury on thy lips that the bite of another's passion has caused thee, And yet, I am melting into thee and thou art melting into me this very moment, when I am fighting with thee!
Art thou in love with another, too?
Is thy heart as impenetrable as darkness, or why art thou bent then in deceiving a simple-hearted girl like me?
O, what dost thou find in me, an illiterate and foolish girl that knows naught!

And why dost thou play with me
in an eternity of pain.

(*Krishna vanishes. Enter a damsel.*)

Damsel : O Radha ! why hast thou such an
intensity of love that makes union
impossible ?
When He comes to thee like the
flowing zephyr of Spring, thou
concealest all thy buds from Him ;
O, why dost thou hold Krishna to
thyself so closely that He is
oppressed by thy love,
O Radha ! why this mystic inversion of
feelings which dry up thy youthful
breasts, full of juice like the two
fruits hanging on the coconut
palm !
O Radha ! how often, how often I told
thee not to let Him go when He
comes like this,
And yet thou art never the wiser,
What use is thy weeping, now that
He has gone ?
What use is thy pining now ?
This whole assembly of thy com-
rades laughs at thee,
Behold thy Beloved, lying on the bed
of the cooling blossom of the
orange tree.
And bless thy eyes by drinking His
presence there !
Do not pine for Him who lives so
deep in thy soul.

O Radha! why dost thou ache and
ache without ceasing?
He has vanished, but He will surely
come again!
He will still speak to thee with His
sweet voice,
Once again it shall be as it has been
before!
Thou art strange, a sweet con-
fusion of feelings!
And thy feelings are the reverse of
others!
Thou art, meseems, quite mad!
When it is time for thee to be sweet
to Him, thou art harsh,
And when He submits, thou turnest
dumb to Him.
When He comes to seek thee, thou
actest like His foe.
And when He faces thee, thou
turnest away thy face from Him!
So everything is inverted in thy
soul,
And therefore thou sufferest!
Who can help thee, all so
foolish!

Strange! The Sandal anointings are
poison to thee,
And the Moon is as the scorching
sun!
The ice-crystals are as sparks of
fire to thee!
And the pleasures of senses are as
diseases!
Surely thou art not as others
are!

Scene VIII

(*It is evening, and Radha is seen, her face torn with anguish ; her condition is troubling the hearts of all her companions, yet she sits self-cursed, casting vacant looks about her.*)

(*Krishna enters softly.*)

Krishna : O Beloved ! O Great lady of exquisite sweetness !
O Beloved ! I thirst for thee !
Deign to cool me by the touch of thy lotus lips !
O Beloved ! speak, for when thou speakest, the flash of thy pearl-white teeth annihilates the darkness that envelops me !
And see, thy face is drawing my eyes, as the moon attracts the blithe moon-bird, to drink the nectar that resides in thy ruby lips.
O Radha ! Thou that hast pure teeth !
If thou art really angry with me, why not punish me, Beloved ! fold me a prisoner in thy arms,
And hurt me with the waves of thy anger,
If this would please thee !
O Beloved ! Thou art my glory,
Thou my life,
Thou my burning gem in this world-sea !
Now love me, favour me !
My soul longs for thee !

O subtle-bodied Beloved!
O! how thy beautiful black eyes, large as the expanded lotus, are shot with that intense red which may be both anger or love,
What is it, Beloved! why in the black night of thy eyes trembles the morning red?
Is it thy anger still, or thy joy of my coming?
Oh! why, Beloved! dost thou still look so strange?
O Beloved! Sadness does not become thee!
Put on thy round breasts thy garland of pearls!
And adorn thy waist with the girdle of the golden bells that emit that miraculous music!
And let thy little bells of joy ring with thy passion and vibrate with it for ever!
Do not be sad, Radha!
O, sweet-voiced Radha!
Permit me, darling! I would anoint thy feet with *Mehdi!*
Thy feet I love, they send a thrill of joy in my heart, thy fragrant feet that touch me when thou and I meet in love,
Thy feet, before whose beauty the lotus-blossom hides in shame.
O Dear One! come and put thy holy feet on my burning forehead!
The touch of thy holy Feet destroys the venom of all passion.

Thy feet that are so very bestowing!
Touch me with thy feet and cool me.

Look, look, Dear One! I am burning!

O angry lady! Do not doubt that thy Krishna loves another or can love another, O Beauty-bodied! O ample-bosomed Love!
Look! there is no room in my heart for another but for thee and thy love.

Come, Dear One! fly into me; melt into me, be me!

O angry lady! why dost thou not know my heart?
And bite my vanishing figure with thy teeth and be sure of me.
And hold my transparent self with silken cords!
And pierce me with thy Self and be me!

O Radha!
Thy face that has the splendour of the Moon,
Thy eye-brows in their superb majesty command obedience,
Thy braids are dangerous like the curling serpents!
And the only charm that can revive me who is bitten by thy angry tress is the Ambrosia that makes thy lips so ruby-red.

O! do not be sad, Radha! Thy silence pains me,

O maiden! Rise up in joy of thyself and burst forth into the dumb loud music of thy passion,
And allay the fire of my heart by thy glances,
And do not turn thy face away from me, do not be such a stranger to me,
See, I have been drawn to earth by thy love so irresistable!
O, do not conceal thy real feeling from me, I know it, Radha, be Me!

O Love! thy lips burn as red as rubies,
And thy temples glow like the *Mahua* flowers,
And thy eyes sparkle in thy own self-glory;
Thou that hast the camphor-white teeth!
Thy nostrils open like the opening of the *Til* blossom!
The Cupid conquers the world-heart, because it worships Beauty, that is thee; be Me!

O my life! how thy eyes are red with the soul-joy,
Thy face brighter than that of the Moon,
Thy legs are as the plantain-stems,
And thy beauty perfect with full glory of all the sixty forms of graces,
O subtle-bodied one! how wonderful that thou being on earth, art as celestially fair as those who dwell on high, O Radha! be Me!

Scene IX

(*The Forest. Radha is still pining. The damsel approaches.*)

Damsel : Radha ! why sittest thou here, when
He has gone to yonder Bamboo forests ?
Follow Him, whose speech is music.
Go and melt into Glory that is He.
O woman of ample thighs and love-filled breasts !
Go to Him, whose feet tread the ground visibly, invisibly !
Radha ! Go, as thy feet rise and fall like those of a *Hansa*, making music as the go,
Take refuge in Him in the *Kokila*-grove !
And listen to the Infinite word of His flute that ravishes the souls of a hundred young brides.
Thou that art the conquerer of gods and the conquered of love !
Rise ! Haste, haste and hie to Him !
There ! dost thou not see His beckoning Hand in the crowd of creepers whose leaves are dancing with breeze ?
O proud woman, of strange ways of love !
O woman, mad-drunk with beauty, free thyself in His love, at the cost of all world-reputation,
Now is thy time ripe to meet Him,

Thy body temple is fully decorated with youth and rose and honey, and the essence of joy is found on thy very hair,

And how the little bells of thy waist-girdle chime invisibly touched by the flowing waves of joy that roll one after the other out of thy heart.

O speechless joy of Beauty! Announce thy youth to God by shaking the jewelled bangles round thy wrist in joy; being no more able to stay in a separate frame from Him.

O thou the bursting flame of pure Rapture!

Rise, my love! It is not only thy heart that pines for Him but His heart pines for thee,

Lo, He sits in the forest engulfed in the utter darkness of His own loneliness,

And is conscious that He cannot conceal Himself from thy love!

And ever expects to hear thy singing word,

And His body shivers with a hundred emotions imagining the touch of thy love-liquid body.

He, too, is like thee in the joy of the Perfect Moment of union,

And at His door He cometh out to see if really thou hast come!

He, too, like thee, shivers with love for thee!

He, too, thrills with the thought of Thee as thou dost thrill with the thought of him,
And He, too, faints in thee now and wakes up in thee!

O Lovely Devotee! Rise and seek Him who is all feeling!

O Radha! The shades of evening are falling fast over the Face of Creation,
And thy Beloved is tired, for the whole day He has been adorning the blue lotus eyes of a hundred ladies with blackness with His own hands,
And he has been decorating a hundred others with the ear-rings made of the *Tamala* flowers!
And He has been catching hold of a hundred beautiful maidens that would have fled with haste from him and adorning their breasts with necklaces of violets.

O Devotee! The dark night is alive, its colour is bluer than that of the *Tamala* leaves,
And on the face of the night is the halo of flying light-shafts that dart from the jewel-garlands hanging like creepers of burning flowers in the necks of seekers that roam in search of His Tryst.
How these strings of gems, shining in the night, declare His presence as the streak on the touch-stone proclaims gold.

(*The damsel and Radha reach His door in the forest and see Him aglint with the gleams of His jewels. The damsel is dazzled by His Glory.*)

Damsel: O Radha! in these groves of Beauty meet Him!
Thou whose face is aglow with His love.
Thou that wearest a joy-garland on thy breasts,
There, in the new leaves of the *Ashoka* tree,
Meet Him!
Thou, the Flower-bodied one! in the flames of this glowing spring, meet Him!
O joy-drunk beautiful songster!
In that bower of confidence where blow the subtle Sandal-zephyrs, meet Him!
Here in the place, shaded by the new shoots of a hundred creepers, meet Him!
O Adept in the joy-drinks of His Beauty!
In this forest here where the clusters of honey-gatherers are humming His name in the ears of the youthful flowers, meet Him!
O lady of pure diamond teeth!
Here in the forest where the *Kokilas* assemble to drink His Beauty, meet Him!
Fear not, Radha! Krishna thirsts for the ambrosia of naming Him that like a song hangs on thy lips,
He seeks the cool shade of thyself,

tired and burnt by the world-desire.
For a moment, for a moment meet Him !

(*Radha enters the deep solitude of the soul, her anklets chime with her joy and her eyes go singing the restless song of glances. Krishna is before her, and she fixes her gaze at the greatest vision of her soul.*)

Radha (*she sings this song with her eyes*) :

O Beloved ! thou that lovest me and only me !
And Thou that hast been longing to see me !
Thy face is bright with the joy of me !
From Thy speech steals the Kama-deva, his monotonous song of the flower-arrow and the coloured bow, and wounds every heart with love.

O Beloved ! As the moon swells the bosom of the sea,
Thou at this moment swellest my soul with Thy love !

O Beloved ! Thy necklace of pure white pearls, hanging down to Thy knee, is like the white swan swimming in the foaming waters of the sky-blue Jamuna !

O Beloved ! Thy body radiates the subtle azure hue !
And how bright is the garment of gold Thou wearest !
Thou art the blue lotus, waving in

the Soul-Transparency, whose roots are deep in the sands of gold in blue air above the heads of all things,
Thy eyes are moving with a meaning as in a blue pond a pair of the blue-necked birds move pecking at the lotus stem !
Thy lips are athirst with longing to kiss me,
And that mysterious smile plays upon Thy face, which is life !
And how Thy ear-rings shine like the suns round Thy lotus face !
And Thy tresses are as the purple-lotus-clouds that cluster round Thy Dawn-face !
And the Sandal-*Tilak* on Thy forehead shines as the moon in the night sky.
Thy body is full of joy,
And Thou art Infinite Impatience of Love !
And on Thy body shine a million stars as sparkling diamonds made of the light of Thy soul !

(*The Radha is singing all this with her eyes, from which trickle down pure tears of ecstacy as a crystal stream of pearl-beads. Krishna gazes at her as, in utter solitude when all her damsels had left her alone to Krishna, she is lying on the bed of flowers drinking Him ; Her love-frame is lying shivering, pierced by the arrow of His beauty and her lips vibrate with the inspired passion for Him, the Beloved.*)

Krishna : O Radha ! Come unto me !
As I have spread flowers for thee in my heart to be blessed by thy touch,
Touch me with thy feet that are red with thy all-pervading passion for me.

O my beloved ! let me hold thy feet in My hand, Thou hast got tired, having travelled such great distance for my sake.
And let me cool my ears with the music that thy anklets chime so deep !

O my life ! speak to me !
That I may drink the nectar streams of thy speech, flowing to me from thy love-liquid Moon-face,
And let me tear the veil with My hand that covers thy ample bosom, emblematic of destroying all separation of me from thee and of thee from me for ever !

O my Beauty ! Embracing me as thy every breath, touch me in thy own soul, with thy Golden Self and cool me with thy Great Devotion.

O Beloved ! I am scorched by the world desire.
Make me alive again by letting me drink from thy lips the ambrosia of naming Me.

O Beloved ! I am burning with the pang of the *Kokila's* song, cool me by the music of the golden Siren-sound of the little bells hanging

in the bejewelled girdle that encircles thy waist!

My Love! Thy eyes are shy to look into mine, for once thou didst fling thyself into anger against me, Open these flower-buds of thine eyes, now!

O Beloved! melt into me and overflow above all barriers into Me!

(*Radha flies into Krishna and disappears. And flashes of light burst out of the body of Krishna like sparks of lightning in the joy of the Union.*)

Last Scene

(*A song by a vanished voice, still ringing in the sky, and all the* Gopikas *listening to it with wonder, their eyes turned up to the Heavens.*)

The Last Song

Radha to Krishna: O son of Yadvas! with Thy love-gathering hands trace on my breasts a flower, with the musk-dust.

O Deliverer from the arrows of Kamdeva! Thou hast kissed off my eye-lids the blackness of my eyes, paint them again, black as the bees!

Beautiful One! Hang in my ears the jewelled ear-rings and see how they shake with Thy love!

Arrange my tresses, O Beloved Krishna! round my temples that are purer

than the lotus-blossom opposite Thee !

O Beloved ! On my moon-like forehead give me the musk-*tilak* of the crescent shape.

O worshipper of women ! Arrange my tresses again, and adorn them with flowers !

O Sweet One of Beautiful heart ! Put on my waist the girdle of jewels and decorate with gems my body of love !

O Love ! Put on my breasts the necklace of flowers, and paint my cheeks with musk,
And braid my tresses with the flower-offerings,
And bind my waist with the singing girdle,
And arrange my bangles on my arms,
And help me with the little silver anklets round my feet !

VII

VAIRAGAM: THE SADNESS OF THE GREAT ILLUSION

As Mr. Uchimura of Japan used to say, how can the Indian genius be anything but religious? "With the highest hills and the lowest plains of the world, your feet touching the tropic and your eyes seeing the frigid zone, with the most fertile plains of the Ganges running into the deserts of Rajputana, with the sublimest scenes of nature in the Himalayas, and the vast unending dusty plains; with the fairest colours of Kashmir, and Chamba mingling with the blackest hues of Madras and Malabar, how could the genius of race be other than contemplative and introspective?"

In a continent of contrasts like India, itself a geographical, ethnological and historical summary of the globe, how could one be other than a Shiva-like ascetic, contemplating God and His works; how can the greatest victory in India be other than the moral victory of self-conquest?

Vairagam is our greatest preparation for serene contemplation. The thorn of ignorance that has pierced our mind can only be taken out by another thorn of *Vairagam*, an error to be corrected by another error. It is the sadness that overwhelms us, when we aim our arrow at a stag and kill a man.

Ignorance compels us to surrender our all to win it back in love; we die to live. Lord Buddha gave himself up to pain till the time that, under the Bodhi

tree, the illumination came and all was light. It is ignorance that constitutes our pain, we are the makers of our own destiny.

A milk-woman—Gujri—was standing in the market place. The procession of the king of the country was passing, with the usual pomp and bustle. In the crush, Gujri's pitcher fell from her head and the milk was spilled and the pitcher lay in dumb pieces on the ground. Just at that moment, the king's elephant passed her and the king saw that Gujri looked at her broken milk-pitcher and smiled! Her smile was too painful for pain itself. The elephant was stopped, the king came down and said, "O Gujri! why didst thou laugh? Thy pitcher is broken, thy milk is spilled, and thou seemest not rich, thy dress is tattered, thy limbs are bare, O Gujri! Why didst thou smile? I beg the secret of thy smile!"

And the following dialogue took place:

O King! Go thy way, I have nothing to share with thee, nothing to tell thee, thou hast thy own misery enough to need anymore.

O Gujri! Thou art what nobody knows here. Thy beauty is that of a princess, on thy forehead shines still the jewel of thy ancestors, whose silver beams thy poverty even cannot conceal from me. Pray tell me who art thou?

O King! I am a poor milk-woman of the town. O King! Go thy way, I have nothing to ask from thee.

O Gujri! The wealth of this poverty is great. The pain of thy own sufferings is rich, what can I give thee?

O King! Get on thy elephant, pray, and pass! Why insistest thou on things that must forever be buried in the dust. I will not say more than what thou hast seen. A milk-woman whose pitcher is broken in the rush of the procession of thy elephant, the milk is spilled.

O Gujri! Reveal thyself to me, I cannot move away. Thy mystic smile haunts me and I cannot go till I know why didst thou smile? Not for thyself but for the good of others, tell me the riddle.

Hear, O Raja then! What good can it do? No one on this earth can help another, O King! But as thou, the king and owner of the land, so commandest me, I must. Life is short, but I have lived many lives over in this life. Memory is both torment and bliss, I am my own tyrant and teacher. First I was a princess, the daughter of a rich merchant prince; I bathed with milk and water poured on me, out of the golden vessels, by the fairy maids. I fed with pearls the golden swans with my own hands. Years passed on. A tempest blew on my house. I was torn from my parents, my parents were torn from each other, perhaps they were killed, our house demolished, our lives destroyed. I fell into the hands of a robber king. He made me his wife. I lived there as the female swan lives, torn from her mate. I bore him a son. Another tempest blew over my husband's palace. My husband was killed, our palace burnt, and I was

tossed about in a hundred lives. Down on the sea of life, I was drowned and saved, I was burnt and made alive, till at last the fates sold me to a Ganika.[1] My lot was then to dance, to sing, to amuse the strangers. Years passed on and a stranger met me. It was my own son from my robber-king. I saw him, but he could not see me, I took a hollow *peepul* trunk, set fire to it, threw it in a river and sat in its hollow. But the rain came, the wind blew, the fire of the peepul-log was blown out, and I drifted on the river till hundreds of miles down here in the village, I was caught by a cow-herd, He took me out, he nursed me, fed me and revived me again. He finally made me his wife. I began this life as helpless as before and bore him children. There are children in the house, but we have no more the number of kine we had. The curse came again and our cows died, our buffaloes fell ill. There is but one pitcher of milk that I bring to the market, to sell and feed my children with. My children are waiting for me at home; my husband is dying. My milk pitcher is lying in pieces here, my milk spilled in dust. O King! when my pitcher fell, I *saw* the Goddess of Destiny face to face, as she came and threw my pitcher down with her own hands and spilled my milk! I saw her doing this.

[1] Singing-girl

I have smiled seeing her and I said to her, " What next ? "

The following One-Act Drama of Bharathari Hari is a free translation of a minstrel song that the wandering Jogis of the Punjab sing.[1]

This song is a type of our *Vairagam* poetry which first leads to sadness, than to a search for the Divine, and finally to self-illumination. Like *Shinghar*, *Vairagam* is a preparation for the traveller's march to the Infinite within. This life is a *Yatra*, or pilgrimage, to the shrine of the Beloved, and all that contributes to our equipage is good. *Vairagam*, *Shinghar*, devotion, love, all find their fulfilment in God-union within our own soul. " Blessed are those whose spell of ignorance is broken, truth has revealed itself in their soul, their illusion is over and knowledge Absolute shines within," says Guru Nanak.

BHARATHARI HARI

DARB SEN :	Father of Bharathari Hari, the old King.
QUEEN CHAND KORAN :	Mother of Bharathari Hari.
BHARATHARI HARI :	Hero of the Drama.
PINGLA :	Queen of Bharathari Hari.
PANDIT :	Astrologer.
MESSENGERS	
HIRA MIRG :	Black buck of the forest.

Scene I

(*Durbar—Old King Darb Sen on Throne.*)

Gate-keeper : Sire ! An astrologer of great renown awaits at the door for thy command.

[1] *Bharathari Hari*, by Bhai Vir Singh, Amritsar.

Darb Sen : Bring him in, haste, my heart aches with an unknown pang.

(*Enter the Astrologer*)

Pandit : Listen to me, O King ! Listen to what I have to say to thee. Devote thyself to Shiva, who filleth all treasuries.

King : Pray for me. God may give me a flower in my garden, a son to my house, and foretell my destiny !

Pandit : Listen to me, O King ! To what I have to say to thee. Thy fate ordains no son for thee.

King : Cross out a few lines of that destiny and engrave one anew.

Pandit : Listen to me, O King ! Listen to what I have to say to thee. What is writ cannot be washed out. It is so writ ! O King !

King : Be seated, O Pandit ! and consult thy book and say what thy book saith, and have thy reward for the reading of my fate !

Pandit : Ah ! my book saith a son will be born in thy house, but the child shall be one of question-

able destiny. Name him Bharathari-Hari. He would be generous, bold and true, a mighty ruler with the star of prosperity shining on his brows, but he would throw his crown and sceptre on the ground and roam as an ascetic in sublime sadness. A mighty grief would wring his soul while still young—perhaps the death of his Beloved, perhaps that of an innocent man accidentally slain by an arrow from his bow. He would marry a Princess of peerless beauty, and his love-story will spread all over the world.

Scene II

(*Palace—King Darb Sen, Queen Chand Koran, and the young Prince Bharathari Hari.*)

Darb Sen: O Queen of the land! Thou hast given to my ancient house this jewel to lighten the darkness of my old age, (*kisses Bharathari Hari*). He will light my path beyond death. His fame will spread beyond the four corners of the world; a great lover of his people, a hero who will draw his mighty bow to protect his subjects. He will give kine and bulls in plenty to the peasants

and make them happy and prosperous. The tiger and the sheep will drink from the same pool during the reign of thy son. There will be more milk in the udders of the kine, a greater yield of wheat in the farms, more juice in the fruits of the garden when he rules over the land. Evil thoughts will vanish like the ghosts of night from his domain, and good thoughts prevail. May he live long.

(*Mother embraces the child. Exit Bharathari Hari.*)

My queen ! I think of giving Raj Tilak at once to Bharathari Hari. I am old and I wish to see him rule the land before I die.

Queen : Thy blessing should be still on thy son. Thy auspicious guidance he needs still, he is so young. O wise and mighty king ! I propose your celebrating Bharathari Hari's marriage first.

Darb Sen : There is but one princess of Sanga blood, the renowned Pingla, whose fame for beauty, learning, wisdom and *Dharma* has reached me. There is none but Pingla who can be a fit wife for thy son.

Queen : O King ! I too have heard of Pingla. She is the latest picture drawn by Brahma, her beauty is free of all faults that man did find till now in the beauty of woman. Brahma has produced in her a marvel of our age. And the Sanga house is attached to ours by an ancient friendship, strengthened afresh by our service and sacrifice for the Great House of Sanga.

Darb Sen : Sanga would be pleased to know of our intention ; let us ask them, with their consent, to arrange the nuptials of the prince.

Scene III

(*A Palace in the Forest. The new Queen of Bharathari Hari, Pingla, standing in the garden. Enter Hira Mirg.*)

Pingla (*concealing her jealousy by feigned wrath*) *:*
How darest thou stand in so much pride before me ;
I am the queen of the land,
Knowest thou me not ?
I am Pingla. Queen of Beauty.
Seest thou not my eyes ?

Hira Mirg (*laughing*) *:* Ah ! I have seen many eyes like thine !
Be not so proud, O Queen Pingla !
Be not proud of thy eyes nor of thy beauty ;

What is a queen, O Queen !
A few days and the life is over.
At last all this shall be dust.
Dust is great ; none else, O Queen !
Thy clothes—this silver and gold
embroidered silk—and thou,
All this shall one day mingle with
the dust.

Pingla : Thou impudent, little, lifeless
creature of the forest,
How pratest thou before me ?
I will see thee killed before I sit
to-night with my king !
And thou art dumb.
I will have thy meat for my dinner !

Hira Mirg : O Queen ! listen to what I say to
thee :
If my time is over,
The king will be able to shoot me
down,
There is no slayer, no slain, no death,
If the king of kings wills so, I shall
die.

(*Exit Black Buck. Enter King Bharathari Hari.*)

King : Why art thou so sad, my Love !
Say what thou desirest ?
I do thy will before the sunset,
To please my most honoured queen.

Pingla : Listen O King ! An arrow hath
pierced my heart,

The words that Black Buck have spoken have consumed all my joy!
My heart burns, my pride is wounded,
Thy wife is insulted by a mere beast,
Protect me from the Black Buck and kill him to-day,
And bring his meat home for the banquet to-night!

King: What says the Queen of the Land?
A mere black buck!
A mere beast of the forest!
An innocent animal offends my queen?
O why doth the queen worry?

Pingla: Ah! the very existence of his beautiful eyes in the forest makes mine less beautiful. (*Aside.*)
But the king must kill the beast to-day.

King: O Queen! listen to what I have to say.
I will not kill the Black Buck.
It is surely a sin for me; I am the king, the son of the Kshatriya, I cannot kill the Black Buck;
I will not kill the Black Buck; the widowed doe will curse me;
If the queen desires meat, I go and bring meat of the doe before the sunset.

O Queen ! Ask me not to kill the
Black Buck ! The doe will weep
for ever in sorrow of his death.

Pingla : Listen, O King ! to what I have to
say to thee,
Why wearest thou the turban on
thy head ?
Why wearest thou the sword, the
bow and the arrow ?
When thy wife is insulted by a mere
beast !
Thy wife is insulted, her pride is
wounded by the piercing words
of the Black Buck !
Oh, how the horned beast looked
at me !
Oh, his frightful eyes !
O King ! listen to what I have to
say to thee,
If thou goest not and if thou killest
not the Black Buck to-day,
Then sit by me, take off thy man's
clothes
And wear the apparels that I wear,
And sit here and spin some thread.

King : O Queen ! listen to what I have to
say to thee,
The forest is full, displace not its joy,
Fill not the forest with lamentations.
A curse will rise out of the heart of
the jungle if I kill the Black
Buck.
O Queen ! ask me not to shed his
blood.

Pingla : O King ! listen to what I have to say to thee,
Give me all the fine clothes of thy dresses,
Give me all the fine arms thou carriest,
Give me the horse on which thou ridest !
I will dress myself in the dress of man,
I will be a man in your place,
And bring thee meat of the Black Buck to-night ;
I will stain the white robe of my sex,
I will kill the Black Buck.
O King Bharathari Hari ! his words like steel-tipped arrows have shot me through my heart.

(*The King, cut to the quick by the taunt of the Queen, rises*)

King : Ho servant ! haste, bring my hunting suit !
Bring me my weapons !
Bring me my best steed !
String up my bow !
Bring me the rhinocerous-skin shield covered with the tiger's skin !
Bring me my spear !
I will go and kill the Black Buck !

Pingla : O King ! listen to what I have to say to thee,
If thou wilt go to kill the Black Buck,
Have before thy mind's eye my two eyes,

If thou bringest not the Black Buck,
Thou shalt be my brother,
And I thy sister from henceforward.
And if thou comest with meat of the Black Buck,
I will be thy dutiful wife,
And thou my beloved husband.

Scene IV

(*Forest : The king, fully armed with bow and arrow, is seen on his horseback, galloping about in search of Hira Mirg. A doe appears.*)

Doe : O King ! listen to what I have to say to thee !
With whose blood are dyed thy clothes to-day ?
Why art thou so fully armed ?
Art thou intent on hunting in the forest ?
Take me, but kill not my Black Buck.

King : O Doe ! It is a sin for me to kill a doe,
I cannot lift my hand on the weaker sex.
I will kill thy Black Buck,
I cannot kill the Doe ;
Thy Black Buck has offended my queen,
The queen of peerless beauty, Pingla,
It is he who must die to-day !

Doe : O King ! listen to what I have to say thee !
Kill not my Black Buck,
Great will be the curse,
Sorrow shall fill the whole country.

(*The king, heeding not the appeal of the doe, puts a sharp-edged arrow in his bow and shoots at the buck, but the Black Buck escapes. The king puts a second and shoots again, but God saves the Black Buck this time too. The horse of the king feels thirsty. The king goes towards the forest pool to water his horse.*)

Doe : O Buck ! Listen to what I have to say to thee !
I was not there that day when thy lot was cast by God,
If I were there, I would have besought Him,
To write again thy fate in a different way,
I would have had thy lot re-written by the same pen according to my heart's desire.
But alas !
Now there is but one way,
Come, O Buck ! we leave this place,
And let us run hence,
We shall never come again across the King,
The king has gone to the forest pool,
Come ! meanwhile we leave these forests too.

Hira Mirg, the Black Buck : Listen, O Doe ! To what I have to say to thee !

I will never leave the forest,
To run away is shame for me!
It is shame for men to fly when in
distress,
He is the son of Darb Sen,
He is the brother of Vikramaditya,
His name is Bharathari Hari,
If we run, he will never let us,
In vain is all such thinking:
His arrow is the arrow made of fire.
I must fall to-day.

(*The king again turns to the chase, the dogs are let loose. The Black Buck flies. The arrow of the king flies after him and the second arrow of the king makes the Black Buck fall wounded on the grass.*)

Hira Mirg: O King! So thou hast yielded thy
honour to the whisperings of
thy Pingla!
And hast cast this arrow of widow-
hood on my home,
The forest shall be full of lamenta-
tions!
But listen to me, O King! Listen
to what I have to say to thee!
These antlers of mine! give to the
Nath,
The Lord, who goes from door to
door, blowing his horn of the
Eternal,
My skin! Give it to the saint who
will sit on it and meditate,
My hoofs! Give them to the man
of action, they will speed him

in the battle-field and he will
always return home a victor,
These eyes ! Give these eyes to thy
Pingla, who has sent thee to
strike me down !

Doe : O King ! Listen to what I have to
say to thee !
Not forever are thy palaces bright,
Not forever are thy gardens gay,
Go ! thy queen will be a widow,
Thou shall see such a thing in thy
turn too !

Scene V

(*The Palace in the Forest.*)

Pingla (*smiling*) *:* Here is at last the Black Buck,
Thou art my Beloved husband,
And I thy dutiful wife !
Thou hast saved my honour !
All honour to thee, O King !

King : O Queen ! Listen to what I have to say
to thee.
On my way I saw an awful scene,
I saw a *Satee* burning herself alive on
the pyre of her dead husband,
The intensity of such love has staggered
me !

Pingla : O King ! Listen to what I have to say
to thee !
The *Satee* is not she who burns herself
thus !

Why call her the *Satee* at all ?
It is only madness that dies thus !
The woman is she who dies within on the very spot,
When she hears the news of the death of her husband.

King : This is impossible !
Who can command death to come when he chooses ?

Pingla : When the woman can make the pain of separation from her beloved to burst into flame within her, she need not seek fire from without to burn herself,
She dies by thought alone,
This is as I say, the world shall witness this !
If Bharathari Hari dies in the jungle, Pingla shall cease to breathe in the palace,
This, O King ! is love !

Scene VI

(The Palace of Pingla. Pingla is seen waiting outside for the king. Enter a messenger.)

Messenger : O Queen ! Mighty queen of our land ! King Bharathari Hari has been mauled by a tiger in the forest !

Pingla : No ! Thou liest, Bharathari Hari is invincible. The King Bharathari Hari is safe. The tigers

shudder at his sight, the elephants crouch at his feet, the whole forest stands in awe when Bharathari rides.

Messenger: Why hath the king in mere jest sent me to give this news so incredible and unjust? How to assure her? (*Aside.*)
Most exalted Queen! It is incredible to thee, but thy king is dead. Here is his bow and quiver. Before our eyes he hath died. The death of our king has filled the land with lamentations.

Pingla (*sighs and cries*): Ah! Bharathari Hari is dead. (*She falls dead.*)

Last Scene

(*A tomb, a little streamlet flowing by. Bharathari Hari is seen at the tomb of Pingla, clad in the skin of the Black Buck, sad unto very death to have killed his own Beloved wife in a trial of her devotion. He has renounced his throne and turned an ascetic.*)

King: Ah! Pingla! Pingla!! Pingla!!!

VIII

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE FAITHFUL

I utter my inmost thankfulness for this supreme
vision of faith that the Master has given me,
If I feel pure, it is He who has washed me and
clothed me in His Sunshine.
A thought of kindness and a divine feeling of
love in me is His Mercy.
The whole creation is His letter to me and I now
know that His gods are always with me;
they help me to cling to Him in love and
faith when the Illusion presses me and weighs
me down like a phantom of the night.

I am but one of the beasts, grazing on this earth,
It is by His Mercy that I can lift up my head and
see the pure sky.
He sends me kisses in the rays of the Sun and
embraces me in the cooling shower of rain.
In the rolling day and night, in the twinkling
stars, it is He who sports with me.
If a full-blown rose gives me a thrill of gladness,
His garment must have touched me, as He passed
by.
He vitalises me and chooses to play with me.
When I see this vision, all is good; all is according
to His will;
He came in me to my mother and in my mother
to me,

He came in the husband to the wife and in the wife to the husband;
In the Sun's ray to the lotus, in the calf to the cow, both the flower and the bee is He.
There is no hate between me and my foe;
No one ever deceived me, He came and touched me from behind and left me to guess who it was:
No one kills me, it is His word that pierces me and the vessel is broken by His arrow.

Did I ever say this is right and this wrong? I contradict myself,
Did I ever say He hates me and He loves me? I contradict myself,
Did I say what I should not have said? I unsay it now;
Sitting in this supreme light and bliss, I contradict myself, this moment contradicts the next,
I am an eternity at all the diamond-points of space and time.

All things are sweet with Him and He is my faith and truth; I reckon nothing is of any consequence else to me.
The Bride is impatient for the embrace of the Bridegroom. No more ceremonies pray: A free passage for love over all heads!
The gold-limbed man of the Sun weds the silver-limbed daughter of the Moon and from this union springs Love. This is the son of man.

The poetry that employs symbols from the life of flowers and trees is not so divinely restless, so restlessly calm and so fearfully significant to me as the wedding of Shiva and Parbati. What is the quivering of the

poor leaves compared with the quivering of one pair of lips here and another at a distance of ten thousand miles ? What is there so significant in Nature as the pure glance of a man and the love-appeal of a woman waiting for the Bridegroom to come to her by tearing the very veil of sky.

It is only the master mind that can rid itself of dumb and inanimate life in his song of divine praise. Has not Jaidev been the greatest of our ancient poets in this sense ? He comes perilously near God when he says : " O Krishna ! Come, my Lord ! And put your Lotus feet on my bosom and cool down my earthly love into the divine love for Thee." Nothing can cool us but the imprint of His Feet on our burning bosoms. The old animal delights are transmuted into the divine heaven of pure bliss, by His alchemical touch. Thus it has ever been and thus it shall be forever. Guru Nanak and his nine Beloveds express their soul by similar symbols. Guru Gobind Singh takes up Krishna Lila and puts a new Git Gobind in Brij Bhasha, in modern Punjab, for us. Is not nature poetry the diluted musk from here ? The high æstheticism of all this may seem dangerous, but all spiritual things are fatal and turn on a sword-edge.

It is He who can make men and angels of us by a touch. His powerful arms lift us from one plane to another. We of the same plane cannot lift each other above ourselves or leave the body, despite our pious intentions. The Higher life flows into us from the Immortals and they give us proof of the realities of life beyond the grave. It is they who can admit us into the song of faith, it is they, who, at their will, can be visible and invisible. We are on this earth and in this life like fields that must wait and receive

the inspiration of rain and sunshine before they can be fertile. The whole creation is used by them to bring their messages to us. In a million ways they awaken us to the song of prayer. We can do nothing, all is being done for us by them.

When we think we do something, we shut ourselves in; when we say nothing and wait, we drink the Divine light in an hitherto unknown manner.

Over-intellectuality is a hinderance to inspiration of faith; as it is sheer heaviness in true poetry. He who knows Brahma is like a child, they say. What is the knowledge of Brahma of which there is so much discussion on this earth? It is nothing of our own learning; it is the inspiration of God. It is the gift of the Immortals living in a world of life, subtler and higher than ours. And this Divine knowledge of the Brahma is a connecting link between them and us. "He knows Him whom He so favours."

—*Guru Grantha.*

There is no royal road to the Inspiration of Love.

The true musician never plays on the citar, he gives it into His Hands, the Master comes and plays through the musician's fingers. So it is with the painter and the poet; Goethe complains that the season of inspiration is so rare. It is within us, no doubt, but wholly beyond our control and outside the sphere of our will. All is one self, one soul, but inspiration is self-realization which is infinite and not feeble self-perfections and self-satiations on one dead level, in one miserable moment. Soul is above time and space; it is infinite in time and space. There are a million unknown planes of life and love and joy.

Buddha comes as inspiration. All is weariness of the spirit without that. Our man-worship is stupid, so is our God-worship. To think of God without a Mohammad is folly. But no one knows the way of inspiration.

" It is the cup of nectar in the Husband's hand and He makes us drink as He wills."—*Guru Nanak.*

The father of Joseph, himself a prophet of God, went crying everywhere for his son, and passed the well where his brothers had thrown him. He could not find him when he tried so hard. He became blind weeping for his son. After twelve years, he said one day : " Go to Egypt, my children : My Joseph is in Egypt. I smell my Beloved in the scents that come to me on the winds blowing from Egypt." Even prophets of God like Jacob have failed to command this inspiration of smelling one's Beloved across the seas in the scents borne on the winds !

The seed of faith comes to us borne on the tip of His Arrow of light, shot from His bow ; it pierces the soul of man, when He is initiated into immortality. The man is thus impregnated with the Grace of God. With the seed of God in me, I bear His word, the holy child. I am holy Motherhood, I bear the child—Nam —while still a virgin.

I enter the vision and the beatific vision fills me. There is no matter, no law of matter ; there is but one God. In this silence everything is a song, in this rapture, all is sweet and unreal as a dream. In its supreme transcendance there is nothing but " me."

As the fish can feel the touch of water but knows not the whole sea, as the lotus is satiated by the touch of the morning ray, as the infant feels the touch of his

parents, so do I feel His touch, but I do not know Him. I do not insist He is one, I do not insist He is many. I do not insist this is wrong, that is right, I do not know. Give me this vision, and take everything else from me.

The wise men miss it, the children find it ; the pious miss it, the sinners find it. He bestoweth as He pleaseth. " Strange are the ways of the Great Dispenser. Here the thieves are set free and the pious men are bound down in chains."—*Bullashah.*

" If a man leaves his home and goes to the forest, he becomes abnormal and wild, if a man stays at home and collects wealth, he loses his soul in gold ; if he is poor, he feels uneasy and wretched ; there is no position where one can feel comfortable. The promise held out by one particular set of conditions of life from a distance, is never kept by them when we approach them. In vain does a man seek inspiration of faith and love in changing conditions of living. Only he gets it and can keep it whom He so favours."

Guru Grantha.

It always comes to us from the invisible and no man can make any progress in spiritual life without getting hold of that golden cord dropped down to him by the Immortals of the Higher World, and rising as they draw him up to themselves.

" Look up and take hold of the Helping Hands that are stretched for thee from above, and put thy hands in those Hands, grasp the Hands firmly, and it is then the Swing of Love swings in the sky, and thou canst sing thy best joy."—*Bhai Vir Singh.*

Those of us who seek to acquire religious merit from

books and men of the earth, earthy, pursue a mirage; it can not be had for any such effort and discipline.

Let us be always as the sun-flower, turning our face in the direction of the sun, waiting, waiting, both for light and rain from Him. It comes from within you. It is that ineffable Love without which the man of inspiration is as a fish without water, as the miser deprived of his gold, as a man without the fair one he loves:

I have not been to my Beloved to-night,
He has not been to me this night,
I slept not, my limbs were being severed from each other by pain,
I passed my night in agony, my flesh was being torn by the pain of separation from Him.—
Guru Grantha.

Truly does the whole of *Guru Grantha* express the joy and pain of the coming and going of inspiration, for this is the religion of Love. If I am not with Him, what is the world to me? I find not the centre of life anywhere else but in the Beloved. The sun and the moon are as drunkards that reel and fall everywhere and go anywhere.

All pursuits of life, virtue as well as vice, knowledge and ignorance, labour and pain, sacrifice and love, are like a crowd of widows beating their breasts and tearing their hair.

"Without the inspiration of Nam all are dead carcases."—*Guru Nanak.*

On the door of Buddha's temple, the poor beggars of dead thought, dead religions, dead ethics, the ghosts of social service and reform, and the dead prayers and songs and hymns and *mantrams*, wait shivering with awful cold. Buddha is not within.

"The Pundit's house of holy lore caught fire and all were burnt, both the Pundit and his followers. I escaped this havoc as I am with my God."—*Kabir.*

If I am not with Him, my bread and water is poison, all love is insanity. But if I am with Him, my home is full of nectar and I drink the milk of innocence. I love my children and wife, my father and mother; they are my gods. All that happens to me is His blessing and I live in peace that now nothing can destroy.

He is not in the forests, neither in solitude nor in society. He is in me; all is well when I am well. The whole world is in unison only when I am with Him. I sought Him in pain, he turned upon me and said: "I am pleasure." I sought Him in pleasure, He turned upon me and said: "I am pain." In renunciation He came and whispered: "I do not live in forests, I live in pearl-palaces." When I was in palaces He said: "Go and find me in the forest." When I turned my back on woman, He laughed at me and said: "Seest thou not, I am the beautiful woman."

A bee desires nothing from the rose but its sweetness. What do we really need from the Eternal but a Buddha, a Guru Nanak?

The little violet needs but a drop of dew; why this talk of the personal and the impersonal?

Without inspiration nothing is true, with inspiration all is true. There is nothing but Truth.

As the musician who has been initiated into the art, turns his flesh and bone into music, so do the disciples change their flesh and bone into Him. As the alchemist, by melting his baser metal again and again in fire,

changes it into gold, so do the disciples change their all into Him.

They repeat the song of faith, "Guru Nanak," "Guru Nanak," "Thou," "Thou," and the blood of the Guru begins to course in their veins. Is it not enough that we have Him as our personal God?

But have you received the "Grain of Faith" from the Master? "He who has received this grain in his soul has no peer."—*Guru Grantha.*

There is no religion nor art without His inspiration.

It is when inspiration has left us that religion assumes the form of ethics, philanthropy, humanity, churches, mosques and temples, hospitals and orphanages, because inspiration needs no such crutches. The earth is the temple with the whole sky as its roof. The winds are His fans, the fragrance of the world is the curling incense on His altar. There is no sickness, no "falling out with the Divine," when inspiration comes from Heaven, consuming all our carnality. Religion in its nervous exhaustion, instead of making men, begins to make nations of animals on this earth binding them together by the mere phantoms of a bygone inspiration. Race-building and nation-making is only visible when the inner floods have dried up. "Man needs no ropes around his neck, only animals need to be chained down." The dead and ethical codes of categorical imperatives are ropes for the animals, because men always follow the supreme law of their own being.

It is only the increased sickness of the soul that demands the props of a philosophy to support its semblance of life. Philosophy is merely a weed; we have no need of it when we are alive with the inspiration of love.

What matter the duties and doing good to others

with which the eyes of man are so filled in these days ! All your mighty principles, without His love burning in your bosom, are fevers, plagues, and epidemics.

" What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul," said Jesus.

As the moon-bird flies towards the Moon, as the *Hansa* cannot live without the transparent waters of the Mansarowar, so do the disciples pine for him. They lift their heads to His sky as the flowers raise their face to the sun.

Art is the secret realization of Life's open secret. So far as partaking of the fruits of life is concerned, we measure our perfection of art from the success we achieve in concealing it from all. " O what should I do, friends ! Tell me, tell me how I may conceal my secret of love. The secret is wrenching my heart and escaping from me ! O what shall I do ? O what shall I do ? " cries Hafiz, of Persia. Praising is not enough, praying to Him is not enough ; being God is love. Everything—art, knowledge, religion—is good as long as it aids us on this path and everything however good is Satanic if it fetter our feet in our march to His shrine.

I am that transparency of soul in which things and thoughts cast their shadows and excite in me a million moods and tempers, now making me dull, now omniscient. I am the blue waters on whose bosom the winds come and play freely, I am what another sees in me.

" I know not my name nor caste nor colour nor creed. Tell me, O Mussalmans, tell me ! Who am I ? I know not who I am," sings Shamas Tabrez, of Persia. All is well if we are spell-bound with wonder

and continually moist with rapture. Give me the eyes, drenched with the beauty of His face, half-closed in the rapture of His presence.

I see things from my view-point and I pass with supreme indifference what pertains not to my journey nor to my destination. I am the bee of the flower that has seen Him and has buried in its depths the secret of His Love.

My East is the sacred region whence come our burning gems and jewels. All other directions are death, on whose bosom even the jewellery of Heaven burns to ashes. Where the extinguished flames get relighted is my East! My East is a Man!

I am responsible only for the joy of my inner ravishment experienced at seeing Him pass me, and not for what I say. At times I get so wondrously poised that whatever I say about men and things has a meaning of its own, unintelligible though it may be both to you and to me.

The Beloved alone can be faithful to Love; who else can? Love is His gift. As long as Love has not come to us, we disappoint ourselves in an ever-revolving fascination with its shadows that move in a million eyes. Till then we are illusion-fettered.

This is the land of the Beloved, it is the holy of holies,
If Thou darest, enter the Temple, but beware—either give thyself wholly to the Beloved,
Or enter it not.—*Magrabi, of Persia.*

The conquest of our own solitude is the battle we

are engaged in ; the conquest of society is a delusion, it is the mire in which the great fall and cry bitterly in their solitude. Be yourself alone and then count your earning of life. Put an Eastern mind into the wilderness of Arabia, with nothing but the burning sands below his feet, and fiery stars above him, he will be a prophet in a few years. It is the conquest of the solitude of my own soul that makes me the true conquerer of the whole world. I do not need to feel the pulse of another to *diagnose* a disease, my hand is on my own pulse, I am both the health and the disease of the world.

Greatness and smallness are of His Selection ; he chooses some for work and some for leisure. If we forget Him not, the throne and the hovel are an equal joy ; of our own seeking both are weariness of the flesh.

If I be a king, when a servant brings me water, I thank him. How loving of Him, who has provided me with a cup of water when I felt thirsty. How good of Him ! He sent me a loaf when I was hungry ; He gives me clothes to cover my shame. Thanking Him, feeling Him, kissing His Lotus feet, I live in solitude on the throne, or in the crowded thoroughfares, lit by the lamp of this love. As a poor man I look up to Him for my daily bread and raiment ; I pray Him to cover me with His Mercy. You will find me at the well, talking to the women ; you will find me in the streets, playing with the boys ; you will find me ploughing the soil, building huts, smelting iron, but above the joys and labour of life, illuminating it all, is the glow of my eyes, illumined with His Love that spreads its soft lustre over my lonely day and night.

The old Hindu, in those days of glory long gone by, on his death-bed insisted that the lamp must be lighted that he might worship the flame before passing into the darkness of the Infinite. He desired the flame for which Goethe cried. But it cannot be lighted at that supreme moment if it has not been a constant companion throughout the life he had on earth; strange superstitions remain when great ideas lose their real meaning by the extinction of the type of men who set them as an example for us. The dying Hindu is nowadays forcibly taken from his bed, put on the bed of sand and Kusha grass on a woollen blanket, a lamp is lit for him to worship and he dies. But this was not the original idea. If he is dying, suffocated in agony under the debris of bricks and mortar, let him die! But if he has heard the Divine Call and in his life-time apprehends the end of his journey on earth, he goes and lives on the starlit sands of a river bank, puts up the wick of his heart that lit all his life's dead hours and taking his trained mind off all things dips it into this solitary light of the Love of His Lotus Feet; and looking at the starry worlds, while sitting at the feet of Mother-earth, touched by the green grass, and kissed by the sister wind and the brother water for the last time, he takes his last plunge into the Beloved Flame. Ah! then it is the glory of death! This was the death of the great Indians of the past—but it was the climax of the conquest of solitude. Such ones, many times before their death, passed beyond death and came back. They knew themselves.

At that supreme moment, we shall see the vanity of life in the vulgar to-days; the emptiness of social gatherings; the poisonous nature of modern happiness, and the vulgar fashions and gross appetites that

drive every man every hour from solitude to the noisy pig-sticking of common life.

The struggle for existence is for the ignorant; for the wise there is the end of all struggle! This is the real education. It comes to me from the God-like soul of my mother, for the great *Churala* taught nothing, but took her children one after another in her lap and sang His hymns, looking at them, into their eyes and remembering the Great Teacher-Heart and praising it.

"Thou art holy; Thou art the Essence of Knowledge; Thou art colourless, garbless, Infinite! Thou art beyond the Sansar-Maya. Thou art God." Rocked thus, I entered the world; I went to school as a prince, who knows already his regal destiny and goes about equipping himself with the arts and sciences of life to go through the great Illusion with power, wisdom, and watchfulness.

I was born in hymns; I was fed with the milk of hymns; I came drinking light and go out drinking light, to me no learning of the worlds were of any use whatever. I brought my seeds with myself, gathered from ages of my life before this, a lap full of them, a head-load full of them, and all my holsters full of them; and your clumsiness in teaching me things foreign to my soul burnt them all and filled my pockets with soot then bidding me go sow and reap it!

Give me back in my school days, the flashes of the sword to play with, the little quiver for my back, give me in my hand a little bow and arrow, and bind me an armlet on my arm, containing the talisman of Guru Gobind Singh. I, too, play with the tiger as played the child of Dushyanta; I, too, will contemplate like Dhruva; I, too, will dance like Prahlad.

The rivers are in angry flood!
The saints live on the other shore,
There are floods where elephants get drowned, and ships get sunk,
O beautiful young girl! thou darest jump into the floods where no one dares!
Dead or alive, jump! The saints shall take thee across!
And thy heart shall be the temple where the saints shall enshrine the Word of God!

"Where is liberty, even if I could fly right up to the roof of this Universe, there is no way out; I would have flown but there is no way out of life!"

—*An Urdu Poet.*

The wanton, sensual *abandon* of the world and the sublime self-control of the Upnishadic seer are poles at the two extremities of the caged life which flutters its wings to be free, rocked in the swing of a great pendulum between these two poles.

Is freedom to be found in the death of senses? Are stones free? Are rocks free? The river and the mountain, the cloud and the wood, the rain and sunshine, are cycle-bound. No one can fly! The death of senses makes men rocks and all the paths lead to still darker dungeons. Indulgence makes men worse than animals. Freedom lies in the other direction, where senses are intensified a myriadfold, and man lives in intensified subjectivity.

"Liberty is the name of the Absolute Polarity. God is the only One who is free, both of self and Maya. Be God, standing erect! Liberty is a straight, white column of light, a tower of fire shooting upward, higher and higher, still higher and ever higher. When

you lie on the ground and look up at the stars you are a slave. When you rise slowly, and are one with the tower of fire, you are free. All the five senses are yours, to rise and stand erect. Life is a supreme vertical line, the line of death makes a right angle with it. Erect standing is liberty; the spilling of blood is not the price of liberty, as the insane world howls about it. The Master's Lotus sheds its aroma of absolute freedom into my risen, self-realized consciousness. Liberty is in the glance of the Highest. Only the Risen Ones know it."—*Bhai Vir Singh.*

The ideal of democracy presupposes a world full of shadowless angels, all made of love, pure intellect and soul. True democracy is of human love, otherwise be it democracy or autocracy, it is the "Cunninger Animal" that rides the less cunning. In the heart of the Beloved is equality of life, nowhere else. Whether I rule or persuade a million more to agree with me and follow me, it is autocracy. "Self is the disease and self is the cure," says Guru Nanak. The ghost-ridden world follows ephemeral phantoms and clutches at dead darkness. Light cannot come from outside. I hold only him to be the true Statesman, who leads man to inner height, inner Godhead. There is no greatness but one, which we Easterns call the *Avtar*, and it is His touch that makes us free. Carlyle is right as to Odin and partially as to Mohammed, but thereafter his views are confused. The world of stars is in the mouth of Krishna. When the monsoon breaks on the parched land of India, I think of the advent of a great man; it is so sudden, so overwhelming, so infinite. It is always a descent from on high, the ascents of man towards those heights can never have that infinity at their back. For centuries we go on, acknowledging

all kinds of greatness, but when He appears, we know all else is small, very small. No institutions and systems, however grand, can suit me for more than a day. Every thought that has not in it the soul of true greatness, soon loses its freshness and value.

Nations cannot be free when I am grovelling! Nations cannot be enslaved when I am the red pillar of liberty. Kings and commoners, the sick and their physicians, are eternally helpless unless I, like Prahlad, rise and enter into the red pillar which, tearing the sky, shoots above the stars!

I preach no *Sadhana* of liberty or salvation, I point out no difficulties of self-control and *Yogis'* concentration; I only say let the lotus step softly up into its gay blossom. I am liberty, not only for man and nations but for all creation. For my freedom, even as the lotus needs the warmth of the Sun, even as woman needs the love of man, so do I need Him. Without His face shining upon me, I can never be free. Unless I am free, there is no freedom. Freedom, the whole of it, is within me. It is not in statute books nor in man-made laws—miserable, foolish things that have always hung its men and women, burnt alive its saints and sent to the scaffold some of the greatest benefactors of Humanity. Death is not the remedy. Nothing dies, everything revolves in a circle, coming again and again to the place from which it started. Metampsychosis, *Karma*, is true and yet false; the modern evolution, everything said and imagined, all proven laws are true yet all are false, inasmuch as they do not exist in this particular form in which we know them in the vertical Life-Pillar that, touching the circle of endless evolution and involution, stands straight, vertical. Freedom cannot be on the great

wheel of birth and death, but along this tangent at right angles to the circle of illusion! So did Buddha declare, and so, also, did Guru Nanak. "Yes, liberty is outside this 'Golden egg of Illusion,' as the Guru says; when the egg of superstition is hatched, man gets his wings."

When once initiated into His favour, the relativity of the position here and now does not matter. On the hill is the Beloved, I stand on the peak and glide downward through the groves of love, now buried in honey, now in the light of His Lotus; now caught in His mouth, now cast at His feet; now in blossom, now in leaf; in the multitudinous sensuous life I touch His Flesh everywhere. But I die if He goes out of me, there is nothing in either worlds that can refresh me; metaphysics is a poison, poetry a curse, art is sickness and life an empty house.

Blessed, blessed are my eyes! I see such glories as men and women and children, I see flowers and stars! Blessed, blessed is my mouth! I kiss the white hem of His robe—Creation. Blessed, blessed is my skin! I sense Him in His body touching my body. Blessed, blessed are my nostrils! I perceive Him in the scents of infancy, youth and old age, in manhood, womanhood and maidenhood. O five senses! be ye ten or a thousand! O my hands and feet! my self! Be millions and ever more, that I may drink deeper of liberty and beauty, and live a million times, intensified for the joy that is He. May life be long, unending, everlasting, now that I am free!

Return, return, my love, my passion, my instinct of wasting myself!

Return, return, my pleasure in sensuous revelry, come back to me!

All is right when I am right. Piety is my passion, religion is my love, purity is my colour, I am liberty !

Liberty is gained at last, but how simply ! In His name, I found it. Ah ! None understands me and so let it be. All will fain be slaves, unable to shatter the wheel of the Jagan Nath Car that grinds them in the *Sansar Chakra !* I have solved my problem, let it be !

Ah ! well might the subjects of mighty Ravana of Lanka, cry :

What use these burning mansions of gold of the Lanka ?
Where every day a new fire, a strange fear consumes the soul !
Better, better be the mud huts in the Kingdom of Rama,
Wherewith but a few beans for his daily subsistence,
Man sleeps in the Peace of Righteousness.

IX

HOME AND SOCIETY

A little wilderness by the side of a river, a well, or a spring, adorned with a few plantain trees ; the purple smoke of an open hearth fire rising from under the trees like incense ; a little courtyard, where marigolds bloom and *Tulsi* spreads its aroma, with the man and his children lodged beneath a roof of grass thatch in the centre ; and a simple mudwall around the hut to allow the steady burning of a candle for light ; such is the Eastern conception of a home. Here the children rise every morn to sing songs of the Beloved and offer the threads of friendship to the *Tulsi* bush and the *peepul* tree, to bathe the pebbles of the river with milk and water, giving them an honoured place on little mounds of dust, and helping marigolds to grow and driving the calf and the cow to graze on the surrounding turf. Here man and woman till the soil together, churn the milk of the buffalo and the cow, labour, eat and drink and laugh together. And all sleep sound in the Peace of God ! Here the girls and boys go into the wilderness to collect flowers and leaves to make into garlands for the Beloved. A home indeed where come the wild peacocks by dozens, and the sparrows freely enter beneath the lowly roof to share with man his bread and peck the scattered grains as if it was also their nest. A jungle stag and his doe come to the courtyard and speak strange messages to the soul in their beautiful eyes. Here children grow, feeling the dance of the dawn and even-

ing in their own courtyard. A brotherhood arises between these untutored children of man and the crystal waters of the river and the spring, the breezes of strange climes and countries that pass their doors, the day and the night. The sunshine and starshine talk to them; fear and doubt enter not into their heaven, and they live with trees and flowers so that they themselves grow in sweet-smelling companionship! And the meaning of it all opens in His glances as He comes to touch them with IMMORTAL BLISS; He blesses them and passes. No celebration need be ours but the days of His visit to us, the hours of His meeting.

Another home miles apart! As Thoreau says, every man requires for his divine breath, a few acres of wasteland. Why should healthy ones dispute about anything, when they know the peace of the home. It is the diseased, disgruntled man that cries and weeps and claims his rights and wrongs!

The red earthen pitchers, speechless, full of cooling, satiating life water, fresh from the well, furnish us with scripture. They are our poets and priests. Fill yourself with nectar and be dumb, let it flow from every pore of your body; your very flesh is the Temple of God. Be molten in the glory celestial and God comes within you—your heart is His seat. Do not make it hot by desires, by passions, by any kind of worry or haste. Throw out the hot water, fill again with the fresh cool draughts from the Spring, and be always calm, cool, sweet, nourishing. Keep your soul cool, and there can be no disease. Chant *Hari Nama!* Ah! you and your children shall always be well. Nothing can injure you if you injure none. But make no plans. Do not fall into calculations, make no laws; make, instead, songs and sing. As your cow and your bullocks do not think what they will eat

and drink, so you need not think. Just as they have you, you have Him. This is the life of the Spirit: this is both knowledge and power divine.

We only think of Him and live. Life, death, youth, love, labour, rest, pain or pleasure, whatsoever He sends is welcome!

On the well, on the spring, or on the river side, we gather with our empty pitchers and go back with our pitchers full—this is our social gathering, we go empty of soul and return full of nectar.

END